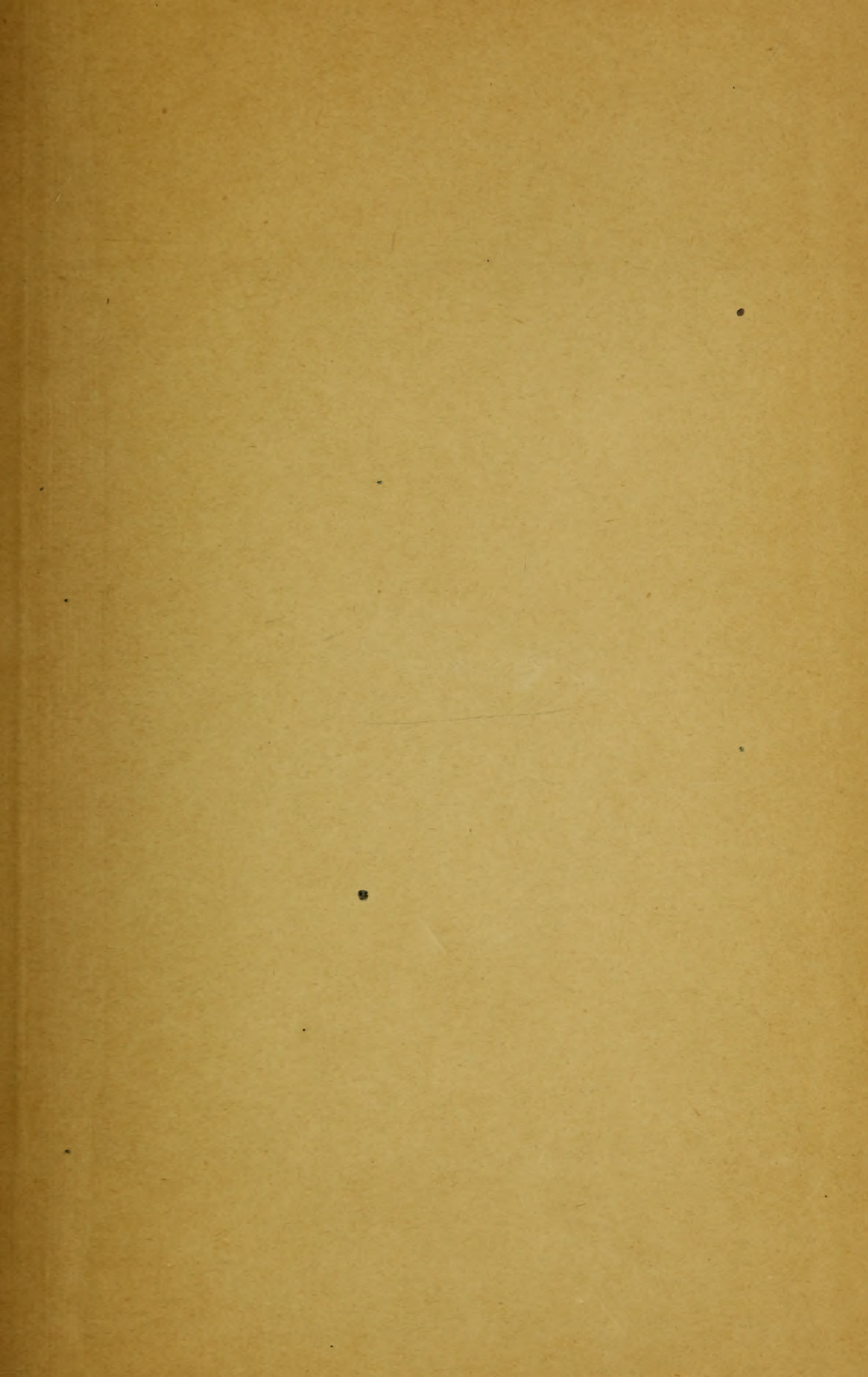


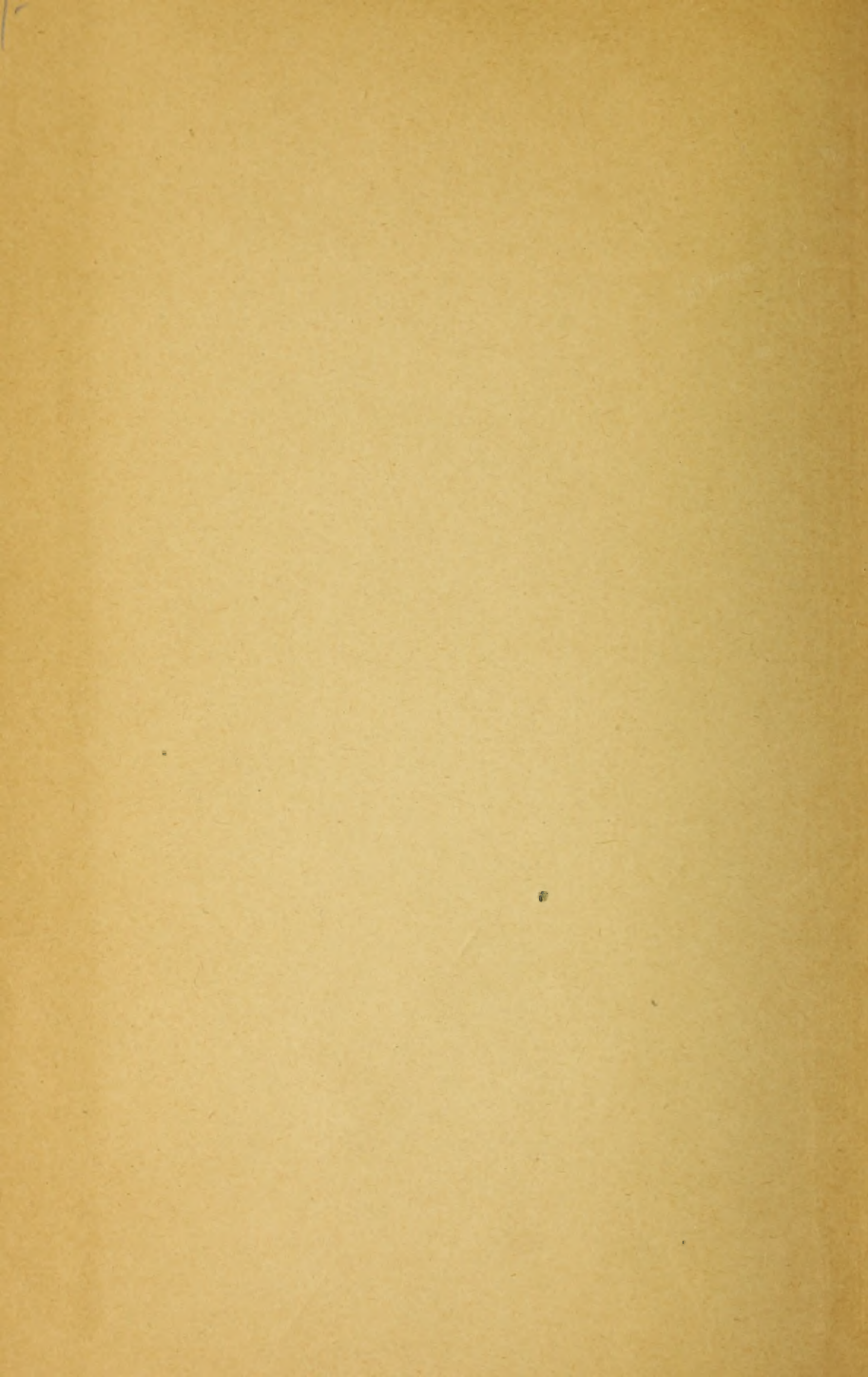
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IMPERIUM ROMANUM

SAECULIS P. CHR. SECUNDO ET TERTIO

VILLARI'S "BARBARIAN INVASION OF ITALY"

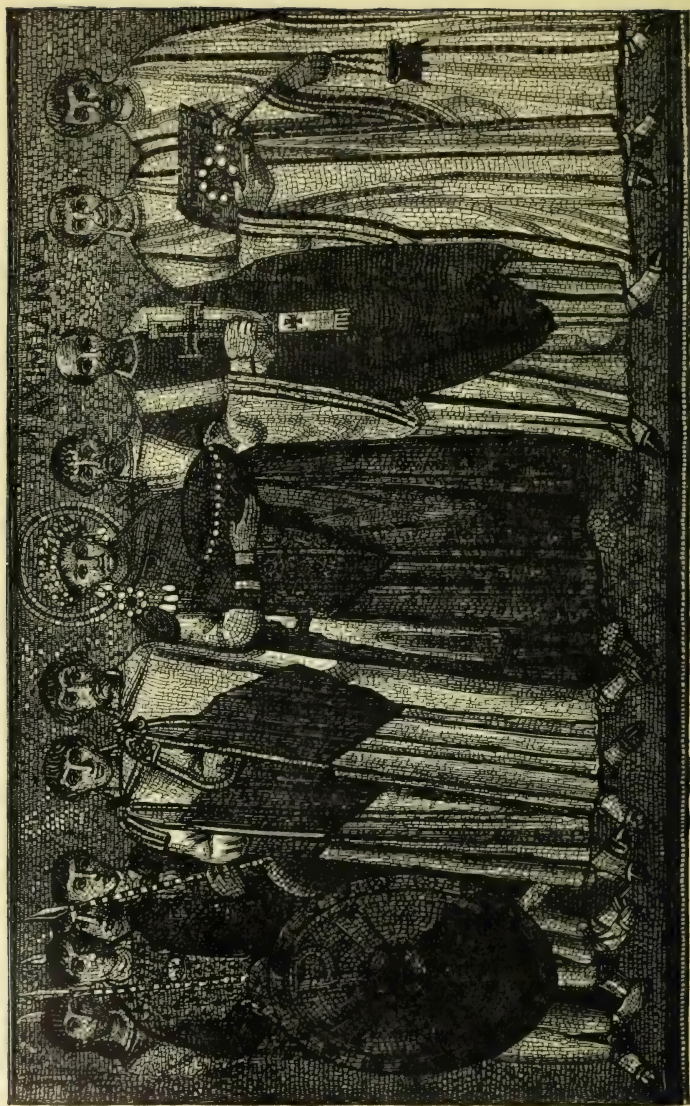




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The Barbarian Invasions of Italy



JUSTINIAN AND HIS NOBLES
(From the Mosaics at Ravenna.)

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The Barbarian Invasions of Italy

BY
PASQUALE VILLARI

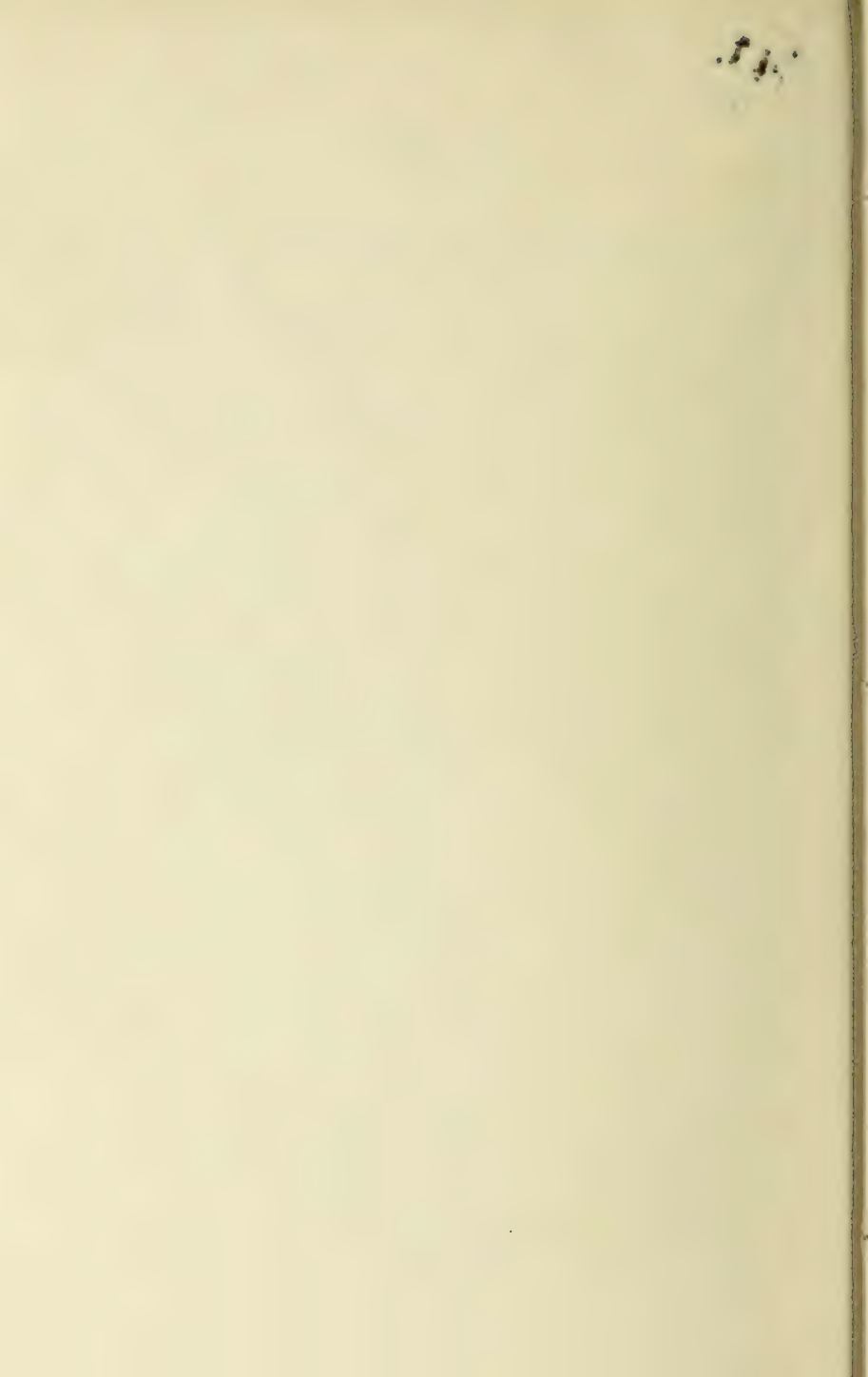
TRANSLATED BY
LINDA VILLARI

WITH FRONTISPIECE AND MAPS

VOL. I

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1902



PREFACE



THE purpose that impelled me to write this book is a very modest one, but extremely difficult to fulfil. Whether I have succeeded or failed the reader must decide. But I should like to explain what induced me to make the attempt.

It is an undeniable fact that since the kingdom of Italy has been established we have made much progress in historical research. This is proved by the great number of Historical Archives published in every part of the country ; by the Commissions and Societies for the study of Italian history which have sprung into existence on all sides ; by the enormous mass of documents daily brought to light ; by the notable advance made in paleography, diplomatics, classic and neo-Latin philology, the history of jurisprudence, and generally in historic method and research. Nevertheless books supplying narratives of past events in a simple, easy, readable style, such as abounded formerly in Italy, and served as models to other countries, are becoming increasingly scarce here. Yet, undeniably, the true object of ransacking the national archives is to assist the production of narratives suited for the general

mass of readers.¹ As it is, we leap from scholastic books read at school, and quickly thrown aside, to learned works, which are only suited to professional scholars, or specialists, as we call them nowadays.

It is easy to understand what serious harm this must cause to our literature and our standard of culture, especially when it is remembered that history in general, and the history of Italy in particular, should be not only a means of instruction, but likewise of national education, by serving as a real factor in the formation of the moral and political character of our country. Cesare Balbo, who was always inspired by lofty patriotism, deplored throughout his life the absence of any popular history of Italy that all might read with pleasure and profit. He made many attempts to write a history of this kind, but was always daunted by the numerous difficulties in the way. At the present time when so many new documents have been published, so many new and subtle controversies started, the difficulties of the task are even greater than before. Some, indeed, are inherent to the nature of the subject ; but others, it must be confessed, are the consequence of our method of treating it and of the direction given to our studies. In any case it is a very arduous task to make a plain and lucid narrative of the history of a land that was formerly divided into so many separate states, every one of which had its own special character and special vicissitudes. We find in the south a feudal kingdom ; in Central Italy the States of the Church, with a government differing from every other, and a history closely connected with that of all Europe ; while towards the north we have an endless string of communes and petty autocracies. How and where shall we find a clue to guide author and reader through the

¹ Professor Romano, of the University of Pavia, has also insisted, in a recent discourse, on the conditions of historical study in Italy.

labyrinth? Of course these difficulties are not confined to Italy; Germany, too, has been always divided and subdivided. Nor would they be insuperable obstacles had we not greatly strengthened them by faults of our own, and in many different ways. In all our schools, as in all our historical publications, we are now almost exclusively concerned with the history of Italy. The production of any Italian work on the history of the Reformation, of the French Revolution, of Germany, England, Spain, or foreign nations in general, has become almost impossible. Yet our own history is so closely bound up with that of all Europe, that neither can be properly comprehended without studying the other. In fact, who could understand mediæval Italian history without studying the Germany of the Middle Ages, or investigate the primary origins of our period of revival without devoting attention to the French Revolution? Who, again, could arrive at a clear conception of the Counter-Reformation in Italy without previous understanding of Luther's Reformation? Accordingly, while our tendency towards an exclusive and unilateral erudition leads us to investigate particular problems of Italian history with ever-increasing zeal, it likewise adds to the difficulty of comprehending the general character of our country or justly estimating our share in the civilisation of the world. Thus we have sometimes the humiliation of seeing foreigners produce better books than we Italians can write on ancient, mediæval, or modern Italy; and our rising generation has to learn the history of its own land from foreign sources. Unfortunately, too, in spite of great learning and good method, such works are sometimes written in a hostile key; their authors being naturally moved by patriotism to extol their own country at Italy's expense. Hence inexact notions and judgments are diffused even among ourselves on the political and moral character of

Italians, and on the intrinsic value of our literature and civilisation, which have a really bad effect upon us by lowering our estimate of our own people.

Another and no slight obstacle to the production of an impartial as well as a patriotic and popular national history is caused by the present position of Italy with regard to the Church. Some of our writers are Guelph, others Ghibelline : the former always seek to praise the Popes, and justify all their deeds ; while the latter, on the contrary, would always blame them, and try to throw into the shade the undeniably great part played by them in our history.

An additional obstacle is the present neglect among us of religious studies, of the history of theology or Christianity. Yet without investigating these subjects how can it be possible to appreciate the history of a people that founded the Catholic Church, of a people whose religious life was formerly so intense, and so closely connected with its political, literary, artistic, and civil life ?

Reflecting on all this, it occurred to me that a series of volumes treating separately and in a popular style of the different periods of Italian history, under all its different aspects, and also comprising the history of other civilised nations, would be decidedly useful to our country. Historical series of this kind are now to be found in all parts of Europe and America ; ought we not then to have one such collection at least ? Accordingly I suggested the idea to that excellent publisher, Signor Hoepli, of Milan, who received it favourably, and undertook to carry it out.

Two volumes of the series have already appeared. The first is a new edition, revised and corrected, of Count Balzani's well-known work on the Italian Chronicles. The second is a history of the Liberation of Italy, by Professor Orsi, of Venice. Three other

volumes will appear before long. One of them, almost completed, on geographical discoveries, is by Professor Errera, of Turin. Professor Salvemini, of Florence, and Professor Brizzolara, of Reggio, treat of the history of Modern Europe. Other volumes are in course of preparation.

Desiring to aid in the general undertaking to the best of my ability, I now contribute a first volume of Italian history, devoted to the period of the Barbarian Invasions. It is neither a learned nor a scholastic book, nor is it a philosophic study of universal history, such as Bryce's "Holy Roman Empire," or Quinet's "Italian Revolutions." I merely narrate events in chronological and logical order, without commenting or descanting on them, doing my best to avoid dryness. Naturally I have consulted many recent works, such as those of Bury, Malfatti, Bertolini, Dahn, Mühlbacher, Hartmann,¹ and, above all, of Hodgkin. I have also recurred to certain elder authorities, such as Gibbon, Tillemont, and Muratori, who never grows old; nor have I forgotten to refer to original documents. But quotations have been omitted as a rule, save in very exceptional cases. I began with the idea that a small volume devoted to a single period of Italian history before the land had been divided and subdivided would be comparatively easy to write; but I speedily discovered that, for me, at least, it was a very difficult task. Nevertheless I have been favoured with much precious aid and advice from two learned colleagues and dear friends, Professor Achille Coen, and Professor Alberto Del Vecchio, and gladly seize this opportunity of publicly expressing my deepest gratitude to them. My thanks are also due to the excellent Professor Luiso for his kind assistance in the correction of proofs.

¹ I have not yet seen the newly published vol. ii. of Hartmann's "History of Italy."

Should these early volumes of the series be favourably received, should the public prove indulgent to the unavoidable defects of an undertaking that is almost a novelty in this land, should we continue to secure the co-operation of learned men, we believe that the series will be an aid to general culture and greatly help to prepare the way for the complete popular history of Italy, that is so much needed and has so long been desired. At all events, we feel persuaded that a collection on the lines we have conceived is not only useful but more needed in Italy than in any other country. Even should this attempt be doomed to failure, we believe that the work will be successfully carried on by others, in that it meets a real want of the present time. An enormous amount of historic material has been accumulated and is increasing from day to day; this should not remain the privileged monopoly of a handful of scholars, but must be reduced to order and made accessible to all readers. Thus only can our country be taught to appreciate its true past and true present, and gain accurate knowledge of the part Italy has formerly played, and of the part she may and should now assume in the history and civilisation of the world.

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BOOK I

*FROM THE DECLINE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE
TO ODOVACAR*

CHAPTER I

THE FALL OF THE EMPIRE

WHAT caused the fall of the Roman Empire? The first reply that occurs to us is this: That the Romans were corrupt and enfeebled by corruption; the Barbarians, while rougher, were also stronger and less corrupt. When the latter had once crossed the Rhine and the Danube, their ultimate victory was assured; the Empire was bound to fall, new social conditions were bound to arise. But what had corrupted and weakened a people that had been for so many centuries a model of discipline, virtue, and strength—a people that had conquered the world? Its corruption was a consequence, not a cause, and was the first symptom of the decline that had already begun. The Empire that Livy had seen bending beneath the burden of its own greatness could not last for ever.

The Empire had brought into being that moral and civil unity of the ancient world which was a necessary preliminary towards the formation of nationalities. Nationalities, in fact, can neither live nor thrive unless so closely inter-related as to feel themselves members of

the same family. But their rise put an end to the existence of that ancient world which recognised the absolute predominance of one civilisation alone, outside of which were only barbarians. Therefore while, on the one hand, and seen from afar, the fall of the Empire may appear an extraordinary, an unexpected event; on the other we are positively moved to amazement by the length of its duration. In fact, under one or another form, we witness its posthumous survival throughout the Middle Ages. Later still, we see vain attempts made to restore it to life, first by Charles V. and then by Napoleon Buonaparte. The truth is that the unity of Europe and the diversity of the nations within its borders are two equally undeniable facts of which the vicissitudes of modern history are the results.

Rome was a city—a commune that began by conquering and assimilating all neighbouring populations, and conquering Italy by their means, and, with Italy, in like manner mastered nearly the whole of the then known world. Naturally, however, the rule of one city over so vast a territory, over such diverse races, all subject to the same government, the same laws, and the same official language, encountered greater difficulties as it extended more widely. The assimilation of the Roman populations had proved comparatively easy, but Africa, Spain, Rhoetia, and Gaul opposed an increasingly obstinate resistance. Then fresh obstacles had to be faced in Asia Minor and in Greece, where the Romans encountered, for the first time, a higher civilisation than their own. After conquering the country by force of arms, they were conquered in their turn by the culture of Greece, and were obliged to fuse their own with it in order to spread both through the world. Thus, by the time the Empire reached to the Rhine and the Danube, it no longer possessed any real kernel of unity corresponding with its outer shell,

The Empire was neither a state nor a nation ; it was a compound of different races, held together by force and subject to the same civilisation. Beyond its frontiers stretched a very vast country, inhabited by militant barbaric tribes, who were pressing to the front with the terrible rush of a river in flood.

Roman society was deeply shaken by this state of things. First of all, the constitution of the army was fundamentally changed. But the army was the chief engine of conquest, chief basis of the Empire. Formerly, as Gibbon justly observed, the armies of the Republic consisted of owners and cultivators of the soil, who sat in public councils, voted the laws, and defended Rome by force of arms. The welfare of their country was bound up in their own welfare. A battle won was their fortune, a battle lost their personal ruin. All material and moral interests, consecrated by religion, combined to make them heroic soldiers and citizens, who, when war was over, returned quietly and modestly to their fields. Who could suppose that the inhabitants of Rhoetia, Spain, and the African coast would fight with the same faith and ardour in defence of a power to which they were often alien and hostile ?

These armies, sent to guard distant and ever-extended frontiers exposed to continual attack, necessarily became standing armies. The men of whom they were composed had been called away from their homes and their land, if they had any. This often remained untilled, while the owners were forced to serve in foreign parts as long as their strength lasted. Accordingly, to meet the pressing need and growing difficulty of obtaining fresh recruits, it was necessary to tempt them to take service by offering higher pay and additional privileges. Hence the custom of allowing even slaves to be enrolled, and especially barbarian slaves, who speedily formed the bulk of the

Roman legions. In this manner war was reduced to a trade, and the strength of the army consisted in its discipline rather than its patriotism. Yet such was the force of its discipline, such the magic effect of the sacred names of Rome and the Empire on the minds of men, that even from all those incongruous elements was welded the formidable host that continued to do wonders for several centuries longer.

The maintenance of this huge army in distant parts was an enormous expense. Consequently the country was more and more heavily taxed. Little by little the chief mission of the Curia and Decurions of the communes became that of squeezing more coin from the already impoverished people. As those magistrates were held responsible for the contributions demanded, even when the inhabitants were unable to pay them, official posts were no longer positions of honour to be eagerly sought, but burdens which every one tried to shirk, even by flight into voluntary exile. Thus private interest, formerly identical with the public good, was now opposed to it, which in all states of society is an unfailing symptom of moral decadence and weakness.

Continual wars led to continual increase in the number of slaves. The leaders of armies as well as purveyors and governors of provinces amassed enormous fortunes. Wealthy men became always richer, poor men more impoverished and crushed down by usury. The latter were usually reduced to becoming dependants of rich landowners as tenants more or less attached to the soil, and paying rent for land that had been formerly their own property. This gave rise to a genuine social-agrarian question that became a considerable factor in promoting civil war and general decadence. The middle class being destroyed, there arose a class holding large estates—the so-called *latifundia*—men owning many tens of thousands

of slaves, and possessing estates from thirty to forty square miles in extent—almost whole provinces, in short. A *latifundium*, or estate of this size, naturally tends to increase, by absorbing neighbouring bits of land and, establishing the system of cultivation on a large scale, also quickly exhausts the soil and diminishes its produce. Thus Italy could no longer feed either her inhabitants or her armies, for even the grain-supply from Sicily had decreased. Accordingly the country began to depend on Africa for its food stuffs, and ran the risk of starving for lack of help from that quarter.

Throughout the vast territories of the Empire numerous cities were scattered, many of which were military or civilian colonies. These cities were organised on the pattern of the capital, having their own assemblies, magistrates, schools, baths and temples, aqueducts, barracks, and amphitheatres. They spread in a thousand different directions, from the central point—the Roman Forum—to the extreme limits of the Empire. Everywhere—and never more than five or six miles apart—were stations with a sufficient number of horses to maintain rapid communication with every part of the Empire. Country houses and farms were thinly sprinkled about the almost deserted rural districts, which were cultivated by slaves and tenants (both classes being nearly on the same footing), who went back to their cities and farmhouses at night. Trade, which was very limited, was also in the hands of slaves, of whom there was a multitude. Gibbon states that in Claudius's reign the population of the Empire amounted to 120,000,000, of whom 60,000,000 were slaves. But although this estimate is open to doubt, it is an undeniable fact that revolts of the slaves more than once brought the Empire to the verge of destruction.

An absolute sovereign was at the head of this complicated social fabric, and under him the army and the

great landowners exercised a tyrannous rule. Before long, the army claimed the right of making, unmaking or, at least, of approving the Emperors, and when split into parties would proclaim several different men at the same time, thereby causing very serious, and often bloody, conflicts. The great landowners held the highest offices of the State, as by hereditary right, and were the chiefs of an enormous bureaucracy. They lived in the cities, together with a mob of slothful paupers, who could only be prevented from rioting and kept in good temper by abundant doles of corn, and plenty of public games and entertainments : *panem et circenses*. When we also remember that in this vast, divided, and disorganised Empire, the same barbarian tribes who were actually threatening its frontiers, already supplied the majority of its soldiers and slaves, we shall easily understand that no power on earth could now avail to arrest the impending catastrophe.

Besides all these factors—civil, military, and economic—of division and weakness, another and by no means inconsiderable one, was furnished by the religious question. Christianity was advancing victoriously from the East, announcing the advent of a new revelation, a new morality. It is true that its theology was the result of a mixture of Greek philosophy engrafted on the Gospel ; but it aimed at the destruction of Paganism, which was the real basis of the Empire. Monotheism was the negation of polytheism ; revelation was not in agreement with the old philosophy. Christianity condemned all violence and force, declared all men and all nations to be equal before God, whereas it was by violence and force that the Empire had subjected all nations to Rome. Christianity, likewise, made the earthly city, the work of men's hands, subject to the heavenly city, the work of God. For Christianity, the social life of this world was of no

account, save as a preparation for the life beyond the tomb. Everything constituting the grandeur of Rome, *i.e.*, the social fabric, patriotism and glory, the very aim of its existence, and all that it held most dear, were now reduced to nullity. Thus the question was not merely that of substituting one religion for another, but of demolishing the fundamental principles of philosophy, of literature, of all civilisation, of a whole moral world, to erect others in their place. It may be easily imagined what profound consternation this caused in Rome, what cruel wounds it inflicted ! Thus we can understand the ferocious persecutions which ensued, and why the most ferocious of all was ordered by the best and most conscientious Emperors. But the blood of martyrs seemed to nourish the new plant, and only served to increase the luxuriance of its growth. All who were oppressed turned with ardour to the new faith which, profiting by old Roman institutions, founded a universal Church that rapidly gained possession of every class of society. It overthrew pagan altars to erect others in their place ; it transformed ancient temples ; it founded charitable institutions, hospitals, and schools, which were practically strongholds destined to aid in destroying the old order of things. The fall of the Empire was no terror to Christians, seeing that it implied the fall of Paganism. Even the irruption of barbarians—for the most part already converted to the faith—was regarded by them as providential, since it was destined for the chastisement of those who still clung to “ the false, lying gods,” and kept open the doors of the temple of Janus.

That all this should reduce morality to chaos, that men of the old order should abandon themselves to scepticism, to despair, or even to the worst and most obscene forms of vice, cannot cause surprise. Nevertheless, the Empire must still have had enormous vitality, seeing that it

continued to exist for several centuries longer, steadily repulsing the repeated attacks of powerful barbarian hordes. We have proofs of its mental, as well as its material, vitality in the diffusion and importance throughout the Empire of the Stoic philosophy that, although imported from Greece, practically acquired a special character in Rome by seeking to assume the guidance of human life, and well-nigh took the place of religion. Throughout the world's history it would be hard to find any nobler, more heroic, yet at the same time more hopeless attempt than this of the Stoics. In the midst of an arbitrary conglomeration of so many different peoples, the forced fusion and confusion of so many creeds and so many different forms of the Paganism that was everywhere tottering to its fall, they sought to revive the old religion and save it from Christianity's victorious attacks, by inculcating the conception and worship of the purest, most disinterested virtue. Renouncing all hope of a future life, all hope of reward, either here on earth or hereafter, despising posthumous glory, and careless of contemporary opinion, they inculcated virtue as an end in itself; and virtue as the sole purpose of life, its own self-contained reward, flowed freely and irresistibly from the heart of man. The serene tranquillity with which the Stoics faced death in the cause of justice was at one time so contagious that they appeared to be creating a new race of heroes, destined to revive the glories of ancient Rome. Unfortunately, it was merely a philosophic experiment, only to be achieved by a few chosen spirits. There was no hope that it could penetrate to the masses, or have the same elevating effect upon them as Christianity, which appealed to all men, and took hold of all. It was a brief flash of lightning, as it were, illuminating the Empire with a fugitive radiance, and this flash seemed once more repeated by the spread of neo-Platonism, as taught by Porphyry and Plotinus.

Marcus Aurelius was the living and most splendid personification of the Stoic creed, which reigned with him on the Imperial throne. Indifferent to glory, contemptuous of all material and visible grandeur, a friend of virtue and justice, he was opposed to war. But when the borders of the Empire were threatened by the Marcomans, who crossed the Danube in junction with other tribes, he took command of the army, and, fighting to the death with the skill of a trained general, finally repulsed and routed the foe. Even while the conflict was going on he did not neglect his philosophic meditations, for on retiring to his tent at night, he continued to write the *Thoughts* which have immortalised his name. "No one," says Renan, "has ever written with equal simplicity, and so entirely for his own use, desiring no witness save God. His pure morality, free from every tie of dogma or system, rose to a height that has never been surpassed. His book—the most purely human ever written—has an undying youth." Nor was he the last of the really great Emperors. From the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus (96–180 A.D.), we find in Nerva, Trajan, and the two Antonines, a series of sovereigns possessed of fitting justice, wisdom, and virtue for the government of the world. The republican Machiavelli, the bitter enemy of Cæsar and ardent eulogist of Brutus, regarded that period of the Empire with the most enthusiastic admiration. Gibbon tells us that were he asked to state at what time during the world's history mankind had been happiest, he could point to no other than that very period. Nevertheless, even while carefully slurring over the cruel persecutions dealt to Christians by some of the Emperors in question, he is yet obliged to add that, in those times, all depended on the will of the autocrat and the army. In fact, before and after that period, some extremely bad Emperors occupied

the throne. Then the disorganising forces which could only lie dormant for a short space, quickly burst forth, bringing to the surface all the social decomposition and corruption, which could be no longer arrested, and which was inevitably bound to open the road to the barbarians.

CHAPTER II

THE BARBARIANS

THE sudden attack delivered by the Cimbri (114 B.C.), their unexpectedly furious advance and repeated success, opened the Romans' eyes for the first time to the peril threatening them from Germany. It is true that C. Marius had completely routed the foe in two great battles (102 and 101 B.C.), so that for about fifty years the Roman frontiers were left in peace. But even Julius Cæsar, after winning many victories, was faced by a Germanic host led by Ariovistus, which, passing the Rhine, poured into Gaul, and fought its way on with desperate valour. Cæsar drove back this horde, and pursued it across the river. There, however, he found a new world, as it were : a numerous, warlike, and semi-nomad population ; a state of society entirely different from that of Rome ; a very severe climate ; a land of bogs and forests, incapable of affording supplies and stubbornly opposing the advance of the Roman army. His keen observation and remarkably practical mind made him recognise at once that it was hopeless to think of permanently conquering, much less Romanising, those northern tribes, and accordingly he again retreated across the Rhine.

But when this valiant chief was dead the Romans forgot to imitate his caution. They once more crossed the

Rhine, penetrated into the heart of Germany, and imported there their own laws, taxes, and administrative system. Consequently there was a formidable insurrection, headed by Arminius, which annihilated an army composed of three legions. The Consul Varus and his principal officers died by their own hands to avoid outliving such disaster and disgrace (9 A.D.). Arminius, and also his brother, had been trained in the Roman army, had fought bravely in its ranks, and had been loaded with honours. Suddenly, however, he returned to his own people, assumed the leadership of the revolt, and, feigning friendship with his former comrades in arms, lured them into an ambuscade, and then fell upon them with the utmost ferocity. His Roman prisoners were mutilated, slaughtered, and hung. The eyes and tongues of many were torn out, and all were treated with the most cruel insult. The dead body of Varus was exhumed and ignominiously treated. Even Marbodius, the chief of the Marcomanni, a foe of Arminius, and who had tried to found a kingdom with institutions copied from the Romans by whom he had been trained, and of whom he feigned to be a faithful ally, became their declared enemy in the hour of peril. Hence it was clear that the Germanic tribes regarded the Romans with an instinctive and inextinguishable hatred, that neither training nor military discipline could in any way abate. Germanicus was sent to avenge Varus's defeat, but this brave leader's victories were won at a heavy cost. In the climate, the forests, morasses, and, above all, in the persistent hostility of the inhabitants, he found ever-growing obstacles. Also, a tremendous storm destroyed a considerable portion of his force during his retreat towards the sea-coast.

In the closing years of his life Augustus became convinced that the Empire should not be pushed beyond the

Rhine or the Danube, should renounce all idea of fresh conquests, and gave advice to that effect in his will. In fact, a line of fortifications was erected on the bank of either river, and, generally speaking, the Empire adhered to this wise course. Trajan alone, intoxicated by visions of glory, crossed over the Danube, and made a victorious advance. And although later on he, too, saw the wisdom of prudence and retraced his steps, Dacia, on the farther side of the river, still remained a Roman province, although this was afterwards seen to be a serious mistake. In fact the easily fortified line for the defence of the Danube was left neglected, inasmuch as it no longer marked the Imperial frontiers, which were now pushed on into eastern Dacia where it was less easy to hold them securely. Nevertheless, for about two hundred and fifty years after the defeat of Varus all barbarian attacks were successfully repulsed. Indeed, the defence of the frontiers became the Empire's constant occupation, almost its chief *raison d'être*.

Who were these barbarians, and what was the object of their persistently renewed attacks? As it is generally admitted, they once inhabited Asia, together with the tribes who later became Greeks and Romans, and in junction with them formed part of what is known in modern parlance as the Aryan family. After a period of existence in common they divided, and migrated in different directions. Those who pushed on to Greece and Italy made rapid progress owing to the milder climate, more fertile soil, more fortunate geographical position, and also to the facility of intercourse with Phœnicians and Egyptians. But those who settled in Germany were deprived of these advantages, and living isolated from all contact with civilised nations in a sterile land, where the climate was severe, had developed in the course of many centuries a strange form of society which, to Roman eyes,

seemed that of mere savages. Yet these barbarian tribes were not savages, and in altered conditions of life, as they proved on being brought into touch with civilisation, were capable of rapid improvement.

Julius Cæsar was the first to give exact particulars concerning these northern tribes. He found them, so he tells us, leading a semi-nomadic life, tilling the ground in the roughest way. They lived by fishing, hunting, and, above all, by the produce of their herds, which formed their chief care. Their usual diet consisted of meat, cheese, and milk. They worshipped the sun and moon, fire, the forces of nature, all things they could see, and that benefited them. With gross superstitions and cruel customs, they had as yet no order of priesthood. But what seemed to him most remarkable of all was the fact that these nomadic tribes had no individual ownership of the soil, which was always the collective property of villages, or rather of clans, *Cognationes*, according to his term, or *Sippen* as they are called by the Germans. Wherever these wandering clans came to a halt their magistrates, or chiefs, divided the occupied ground among them. After one year they were ordered to move elsewhere, and again share the ground in the same manner. Their dwellings consisted of wooden and wicker huts, which could be easily pulled to pieces and carried away as portable property on carts, together with their household gear, their old folks and children. This mode of life was an admirable training for war. Hunting, raiding, and attacking their neighbours to gain fresh land were the continual and necessary employments of a people whose primitive agriculture speedily exhausted the soil. Cæsar was much surprised by the spectacle of a mode of life so utterly different from that of the Romans, and asked the barbarians the reason of it. The explanation he received was that they lived in that way for fear lest a

more settled cultivation of the soil should make them lose the habit of fighting, and lest dwelling in better and more solidly built houses should unfit them to support heat and cold. Likewise, too, lest inequality of fortune and lust of gain should enrich the powerful and impoverish the weak, they endeavoured to avoid the cupidity that gives rise to factions and civil wars, so that the populace, noting that their own fields were equal to those of their leaders, should be satisfied with the justice awarded them.¹ It is hard to believe that the barbarians should have expressed themselves exactly in this style. But doubtless it expressed more or less the views taken by all in those days when comparing the barbarian order of life with that of Rome.

The same idea predominates even more clearly in the "Germania" of Tacitus, our principal authority for a somewhat closer knowledge of the northern tribes. The particulars Cæsar gives us, although few and fragmentary, are clear, precise, and drawn from his own observation and experience. On the other hand, Tacitus gives us a short but thorough treatise on the country, although we have no assurance that he had ever been there. In any case he can have seen only a small portion of it, and most of his information was acquired second-hand, either from Cæsar, the "summus auctor," as he styles him, or from others who had crossed the Rhine. In addition to this, his "Germania" has a set purpose, and its moral and political tendency is very marked. He had a fixed idea (in which he resembled eighteenth-century writers) that primitive peoples, being nearer to man's natural state, are, therefore, even as the ancient Romans, braver, purer, and more honest than races who had been corrupted, like the Romans of his time, by a refined and artificial civilisation. Burning with patriotic ardour, and inspired by an almost

¹ "De Bello Gallico," iv. 1, v. 22, vi. 21 and 22,

prophetic sense of the ruin with which the Empire was threatened, he sought to obviate the peril by reconverting his countrymen to their former rectitude. Hence his enthusiastic description of the barbarian customs, his lofty idealisation of the barbarian mode of life. Undeniably he is a great historian, a great thinker ; but, unlike Cæsar, who is always soberly clear and precise, Tacitus is also a mannerist, whose style, for all its vigour, is often so obscure as to admit of many and diverse interpretations. Accordingly, his work has been the subject of infinite disputes, especially when, as often occurs, it does not quite accord with that of Cæsar. Nevertheless, such divergence may be very easily explained. Tacitus wrote a hundred and fifty years after Cæsar, and by that time Germany was considerably changed. During the intervening period, the barbarians had been long in contact with the Romans, and the passage of the Danube and Rhine had been closed to them exactly when other tribes perhaps were pressing against them from the east. Therefore the semi-nomadic life they had led in Cæsar's time was fast becoming impossible for them, and compelled them to settle more or less permanently on the lands they had seized.

However this may be, even Tacitus describes the inhabitants of Germany as living in a state of barbarism, totally illiterate, knowing so little of metals as scarcely to use them even for weapons, and generally ignorant of money, although certain border tribes had learnt the convenience of it from the Romans. Mainly employed, like their forefathers, in hunting and fighting, all household duties and tillage of the soil was left as much as possible to their old folks and women. Nevertheless, the produce of their flocks and herds was their chief sustenance. They grew wheat, and extracted a beverage from it that took the place of wine. They were temperate

in everything save drink and play, no longer wore solely skins of beasts, but also woollen robes. Their ancient shadowy divinities were now endued with personality, and Tacitus tries to establish their resemblance with the gods of Rome. Their Tius (the Vedic Dyaus), supreme god of the clear sky, also become, from the bellicose nature of the people, the god of war, is confused by him with Mars, and consequently placed in the second rank, while he assigns the highest position to Wustan (the Odin of the Edda), the god of air and storm, and names him Mercury. Donar, Wustan's son,¹ the god of thunder and lightning, and endued with prodigious strength (the Norse Thor), is sometimes confused with Hercules, at other times with Jove. These and the few other divinities have human passions, fight among themselves and take part in human disputes. There were also numbers of spirits or demons haunting the earth, air, and water, the forests and mountains. A priestly order, non-existent in Cæsar's day, had now been established. Even human sacrifices were offered by the barbarians to propitiate their gods. Hence it is impossible to give credence to what Tacitus presently states, *i.e.*, that they built no temples to their gods, almost as though unwilling to profane them by a material form of worship, but spiritually adored them in the forests where these invisible divinities were ever present.²

As we have already said, these barbarian tribes now abode somewhat permanently in the tracts they occupied; but were still without cities, which they regarded as prisons in which "even the fiercest beasts would grow weak." ³ Their dwellings were no longer movable huts

¹ These names are recorded in those of the days of the week, in Italian, German, and English. As the Italian '*Martedì*' is derived from Mars, so *Tuesday* and *Dienstag* from Tius, or Dyaus. As *Mercoledì* comes from Mercury, so *Wednesday* from Wustan. *Giovedì* comes from Jove, and *Donnerstag* and *Thursday* from Donar.

² "Germania," 5, 6, 15, 17, 19.

³ "Historiæ," iv. 64.

of wood alone, but the use of bricks and mortar was still unknown. The houses, as in Swiss, Tirolese, and German villages at the present time, stood detached from one another, on small plots of cultivated ground, also owned by the inmates of the dwelling.¹ This may be noted as a first step towards private possession of fixed estate. Land, nevertheless, was still the collective property of the now almost permanent village. The tribe no longer changed ground every year, but only when migration became a necessity, either because the soil was too far exhausted to provide for the population, or because some mishap in war obliged the tribe to seek refuge elsewhere. But within the territory held by the village, or "mark," as it is sometimes called, there was a continual rotation of occupancy. Tacitus has something to say at one point regarding the mode of dividing the occupied ground, the mutation of crops, and the interchange of land among the families who cultivated it; but the passage is excessively obscure, and has been interpreted in no less than six different ways. The confusion of all these contradictory renderings has been also much increased by the efforts to discover not only what the writer intended to say, but also various points on which he was silent and possibly knew nothing.

After stating that the barbarians were ignorant of the practice of usury that had wrought so much evil among the Romans, Tacitus goes on to say that "the lands are occupied by all, according to the number of the cultivators among whom they are divided; this mode of division being simplified by the vast extent of the occupied tract. Every year the tilled fields are changed, and always some portion is left unused (probably that reserved for grazing). As they (the inhabitants) are not confined to narrow limits, they take no trouble to promote the fertility of the

¹ "Germania," 16.

soil. They are content to grow corn alone, have no orchards, no artificially irrigated pastures, no gardens.”¹

Accordingly, the barbarian village was no longer so mobile as in Cæsar’s time ; but within its limits there was perpetual change, for no one cultivated the same field for more than twelve months. Such part of the ground as was turned into pasture was always for the general use, since the collective ownership of the land was still maintained. Tacitus gives no further particulars, and it were useless to seek for more. But a clearer idea may be obtained of the state of things he describes by glancing at the constitution of the Teutonic Mark² at a much later period, in the Middle Ages. The latter state of things was undoubtedly different from that of Tacitus’s time, but nevertheless had been slowly developed from it by natural evolution, and therefore retained some evident traces of its origin. Part of the land was occupied by houses scattered among the fields, with gardens about them as described by Tacitus. Another part was reserved for a common pasture ground. Lastly, a third portion was cultivated according to very minute and fixed rules, such as would have been impracticable at the early period of which we are writing. This third portion was distributed among the various heads of families, who were bound to work their respective fields in such wise that a third of them should be left fallow each year, so that at the end of three years every part should have had its due term of rest. Although in course of time these fields came to be assigned to the same families for increasingly long terms, yet the shares of ground converted into pasture were always for the public use, thus recording the ancient

¹ “Germania,” 26.

² *Mark* (March), as though to mark or indicate the limits of the village, and often also of the communities (*Markgenossenschaften*) forming parts of the village. Sometimes, however, the March is the tract left as a public pasture ground.

origin of the still existent rule of holding property in common. This state of things, if not exactly that described by Tacitus, was evidently derived from it, and helps us to understand it more clearly.

These barbarians, to whom cities were unknown, were even more ignorant of the meaning of a State. Both Cæsar and Tacitus found them divided into many different peoples, every one of which was arranged and subdivided into what those writers named in Latin style the *Vicus*, *Pagus*, and *Civitas*. The *Vicus*, or village, was a most elementary and vague form of association, based upon the ties of blood forming clanships (*Cognationes*, *Sippen*, *Sippschaften*), with which they were often confused. Several *Vici* conjoined formed the *Pagus*, in German, the *Gau*, resembling a Swiss canton, forming the strongest nucleus and almost the organic unit of barbarian society. Several *Pagi* in union constituted the *Civitas*, the people or race, as some say, the chief barbarian social entity, which, in Cæsar's time, seems to have been far weaker than in that of Tacitus.

Barbarian society was constituted on an entirely military basis, so that *populus* and *exercitus*, freeman and man-at-arms, meant one and the same thing. Here, one might say, we already find the first germ of what was to develop, centuries later, into the compulsory military service, and district organisation of the German army. In those early days, the army was formed on the decimal system into hundreds or *centuries* of villagers recruited and organised in the *Pagi*, and united by the bonds of kindred, under the command of the heads of either their villages or their clans, since even in such matters the ties of blood were always held predominant. Consequently, several modern writers have given the name of Hundred or *Hundertschaft* to the *Pagus* or *Gau*. But in fact the *Gau* varied very much in extent, being sometimes almost

the size of a *Civitas*, when, naturally, the *centuries* being formed in smaller centres, there was a tendency to attribute the title of Hundreds to the villages themselves and confound the latter with their trained bands. This has given rise to endless controversies. Yet the civil and military organisations, although so closely connected, could not be then, and indeed never had been, identical. Hence, were it even absolutely proved that the *century* was organised solely in the *Vicus*, or solely in the *Pagus*, that would by no means imply that the *century* and the *Vicus* or *Pagus* should be confused with each other. It should also be noted that in spite of the great similarity in those days of the numerous Germanic tribes and in the general character of their civil and military systems, there was always much variety as to details between different localities and different tribes. Only an exact knowledge of those details such as we still lack and, perhaps, may never obtain, could enable us precisely to define and determine the general character of a state of things that was so entirely different from our own, and therefore must remain, at least on some points, uncertain and obscure to us.

The Germanic village was under the rule of the *Majores natu*, i.e., of the heads of families or clans, who on all serious matters consulted the people, of whom they took command in time of war. The *Gau* was governed by one or several *Principes*, who were also styled *Magistratus*, and sometimes *Reges*, by the Roman writers. They were chosen from the leading families of the different villages, since even among the Germans there was a class of nobles and a class of slaves. The first was composed either of the oldest families who had formed the first nucleus of the village and gathered other families about them, or individuals who had won special distinction in the field. Slavery was comparatively mild; every

slave receiving an arable field from his master, and paying rent for it in produce or cattle. Subordinate to the *Principes* were the village headmen, who constituted a species of Privy Council and decided on all minor affairs. On graver matters, above all as to making war, the advice of the people was always asked. At certain fixed periods of the year both ordinary and special assemblies were convened. In time of peace the *Principes* administered justice in the *Gau* and the village ;¹ during war they commanded the army. In Cæsar's day they seemed to exercise religious functions also, but these had disappeared in that of Tacitus, when a sacerdotal order, hitherto unknown, had come into existence.

As we have previously remarked, the *Civitas* seems to have been originally constituted in a very defective manner. In fact, Cæsar declares that in times of peace he found it to have no civil government (*in pace nullus est communis magistratus*).² For the council of the *Civitas* (*Consilium Civitatis*), to which Tacitus attributed so much importance, is so rarely mentioned by him as to make us doubt whether it were really a vital element of the Germanic society of his time. Therefore the *Gau* or *Pagus* had greater independence in Cæsar's day ; could undertake forays on its own account, without paying much heed to the wishes or prohibitions of the *Civitas*, from which indeed it sometimes separated outright in order to join another *Gau*. The *Principes*, at the head of every *Civitas* formed a species of Senate, which decided on minor matters, and discussed the preliminaries or weightier points which had to be submitted to the popular assembly, who signified approval by clashing of swords, and disapproval by tumultuous cries. This general assembly held its ordinary meetings either at the new or

¹ "Jura per pagos vicesque reddunt."—"Germania," 12.

² "De Bello Gallico," vi. 23.

full moon, and its special meetings at irregular intervals as necessity imposed.¹ The *Principes* were elected by it, and there is reason to believe that the function consisted in confirming the election of those previously proposed by the *Pagi*. The same assembly conferred the right to bear arms on youths who had attained the legal age, which, as Tacitus expresses it, was the *toga virilis*, or first honour, conferring on them the right of having a share in the republic,² or as we should put it, in "public affairs."

The government of the *Civitas* appears to have been usually carried on in a republican manner, although on many occasions its head seems to have ruled as a monarch, especially when any *Gau* attained predominance over the rest. But what chiefly gave strength and unity to the *Civitas*, drawing to it not only *Pagi*, but even *Civitates* of different tribes, and thus constituting a confederation bearing the name of the leading *Civitas*, was the outbreak of war. Naturally, for any campaign a military chief or *Dux*, was required, on the pattern of an Ariovistus or Arminius—a military dictator, in fact, exercising absolute power, who often retained his position after peace was concluded, and then became a real sovereign, such as we occasionally find appearing, more particularly in eastern Germany. The *Dux* was naturally chosen for his military qualifications, but the princes for the nobility of their birth: *Reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt*.³

Another prevailing institution among these barbarians was the so-called *Comitatus* (*Gefolgschaft*), gathered round the *Princeps* as well as the *Dux*. It was composed of youths of the highest birth and courage, who formed a bodyguard as of paladins to one of their chiefs and were his inseparable companions-at-arms. And as it was a dishonour for any one of them to survive his chief in

¹ "Germania," 11 and foll. ² Ibid., 13. ³ Ibid., 7.

battle, so, too, it was a dishonour for the chief to let them surpass him in valour.¹

If on reviewing the preceding statements we now proceed to draw a comparison between barbarian and Roman society the contrast between them will be plainly seen. The latter was composed of an urban population spread over a large number of cities connected by highways, with stretches of open country tilled by slaves or tenants. The former, on the other hand, was a rural population scattered over land that it cultivated according to its own pleasure. Although even this population comprised both nobles and slaves, far more equality prevailed in it. Differences of fortune mainly consisted in the differing number of flocks and herds. The collective ownership of the soil greatly assisted in uniting the interests of all who fought for the defence of the common territory and deliberated side by side in the popular assemblies. The action of the State was *nil*, since it had no practical existence and everything bore a personal stamp. Crime was punished by allowing the injured party or his kindred to avenge it, and all was arranged by giving satisfaction to individuals instead of to the community. Ties of blood constituted the real basis of society, and partly, too, of the army, which was formed of family groups. In Rome, on the contrary, the State predominated over all, and society was entirely based on legal bonds. Also, the Romans were the first to create private property, by freeing it from its archaic form, thus giving an energetic impulse to individual activity and social progress. But in the struggle for existence the stronger and more fortunate despoiled the weaker, and by abolishing small holdings caused the creation of *latifundia*.

But here on the one side there was enormous wealth, on the other a howling multitude of starving paupers,

¹ "Germania," 14.

while all were cruelly taxed for the maintenance of the army.

If we now tried for a moment to imagine a fusion of these two different social worlds, we should see, on the one hand, how the idea of the State, of law, and of impersonal rights, gave birth to greater order and discipline ; on the other, we should see the revival of small holdings and the land populated anew by free tillers of the soil. But in real life chemical combinations of this kind can be only produced by war and brute force ; consequently when these societies came into violent collision, one of the two, however modified, would necessarily conquer and crush the other. Which would be the victor ? Roman society was a vast and marvellous organisation of great expansive force and power of assimilation. Had it not been threatened by internal decay it would have certainly continued to subject, bind together, and absorb fresh races, and repulse all assaults. It had done this for many centuries. But its victories served to foster the elements of decomposition within and of weakness without the State. Meanwhile the Germanic tribes continually renewed their attacks, urged on by the irresistible need of fresh land that drove them all towards the West. They advanced in tumultuous and ever-increasing hordes like the waves of a storm-lashed sea.

Fortunately for the Empire, this Teuton flood, being split up into a multitude of different races always at strife with one another, had no national unity. This was shown by the fact that while demanding new territory they voluntarily offered to serve under the banners of the Empire, and fought valiantly against their own countrymen. Many battles with barbarians were decided for the Romans by their German legionaries. This may have created the idea that by means of discipline it would be possible to master and assimilate many of the tribes and

thus reduce all the others to subjection. But the example of Arminius proved this to be a mere dream. Barbarians trained under the Roman standard became excellent soldiers, excellent captains ; but, always retaining their Germanic character, were fiercely hostile to the Roman name and Empire despite their admiration for it. Thus, even more than by their common origin, they were kept united by a common hatred. No matter what benefits they received, this hatred was never extinguished. Rome's greatest enemies—those who destroyed the Empire—Alaric, Odovacar, Theodoric—had been trained in the Roman legions. And although in quiet times their racial antipathy slackened, yet in face of any general danger, and, above all, when they found a valiant chief to lead them, it blazed up in full strength, and with the speed of lightning united them in huge confederations, all burning with the same fury. At such times they rushed forward like one man and with irresistible impetus. This was seen even in the days of the Cimbrians, of Ariovistus and Arminius, and was repeated time after time. It is true that this united action never continued for long. The moment of peril passed, it melted away ; but while it lasted it might at any time deal a death-blow to the Empire, especially on account of the vast number of tribes that Germany could bring into the field, and the enormous number of barbarians already enrolled in the Roman army and included among the bondsmen of Rome. Nevertheless, the passage of the Rhine or Danube once achieved and the West flooded with their hordes, it would have been difficult, or indeed impossible, for the barbarians to organise any settled scheme of action. This they instinctively divined, and it proved an added source of weakness by considerably diminishing their confidence in themselves as opposed to the Empire. For they recognised that the Empire was still very strong, both

in its civil and its military constitution ; consequently they admired it as something sacred and eternal, even in the heat of their fiercest assaults.

But, as we have already seen, their foes were exposed to even greater disadvantage. If at any time that marvellous unity, binding and concentrating all the varied forces of the Empire, were even momentarily disorganised by some furious barbarian assault, and suffered heavy disaster at any point, everything threatened to fall to ruin at once, precisely because everything was linked together and owed its vitality and strength to this closeness of cohesion. The individual trained to live for the State alone, and under its protection, could conceive no possibility of existence without it. When abandoned to his own resources he felt like a stray atom in chaos ; he could imagine no possibility of withstanding those Germanic hordes of which every unit pressed forward, maddened with bloodthirsty zeal. He felt as one who suddenly beholds houses thrown down by an earthquake, and finds the ground yielding under him, or as one trapped in a burning theatre. Among the barbarians, on the contrary, such sensations were unknown, inasmuch as they formed part of a society divided and subdivided not only into separate nations, but also into separate groups, or cantons, which could be very easily united, disjoined, and again brought together. Whenever some *Civitas* was vanquished and split up into *Pagi*, the latter could either stand by themselves or be fused with the *Pagi* of another *Civitas* without feeling any dismay. If, by reason of the destruction of his village or of the group to which he belonged, any individual barbarian was suddenly isolated and thrown on his own resources, being accustomed, by forest life, to rely on his own courage and strength of arm, he had no feeling of alarm and readily joined the first tribe he fell in with. All this made the barbarians

often believe, and, later, caused many to repeat, that the Romans were terror-struck at sight of them, and trembled like women. This too, in spite of the fact that the Romans had routed them a short time before, and as soon as broken links were mended, defeated them again and drove them to precipitous flight.

Thus, for about two centuries and a half, the Empire was not only continuously busied in repelling partial inroads from across the Rhine and Danube, but was more than once assailed by formidable hordes of confederated tribes, who penetrated so far into the interior that truly Titanic struggles were required to secure the safety of the Empire. One of these conflicts was the great battle fought by Marcus Aurelius, to which we have already referred. Suddenly, for some unexplained reason—possibly because ousted by other races—an immense multitude of Germanic tribes were seen advancing, led by the Marcomanni and Quadi. They poured into Dacia, passed the Danube, invaded the Empire, and for the first time the sacred Italian soil was trampled by the feet of Teuton warriors (167 A.D.). It was then that Marcus Aurelius forsook his studies, assumed command of the army, and with the skill of a great captain, won repeated victories, thrust the enemy back over the border, and carried on the campaign until his death, on the 17th of March, 180. But in the course of this long and glorious struggle it was seen that the strength of the Empire was becoming exhausted. It had proved necessary to pit barbarians against barbarians, even to the point of admitting certain tribes within the frontiers—a dangerous example that led to fatal results later on. Nevertheless, for the next hundred years matters went smoothly enough, until the same course of events being repeated again and again on an increasingly vaster scale, finally produced far graver consequences.

In fact another serious battle had to be fought with the Goths, regarding whom a few words must now be said, inasmuch as it was this race that eventually struck the deathblow of the Empire. There is a widely spread belief that the Goths were originally inhabitants of Scandinavia, whence, for reasons unknown to us, they pressed forward in a southerly direction. In the days of the Antonines we find them in East Prussia, at the mouth of the Vistula ; towards the end of the third century they were in South Russia, in the vicinity of the Black Sea, together with the Gepidæ, and divided into Ostrogoths and Visigoths, *i.e.*, Eastern and Western Goths. But their Scandinavian derivation and their lengthy march southwards are considered doubtful by other authorities, who hold to the theory that the Goths were really of East German origin, and rather than one distinct race were a mixture of various tribes who spread from north to south and then advanced towards the west. Some writers again consider them derived from the Getæ, and would confound them with that tribe. But these are questions upon which it is difficult to form a decisive opinion, and the more so as during the Middle Ages many different races were indiscriminately styled Goths.

But in any case those particular tribes, moving from Southern Russia towards the west, began to hurl themselves against the frontier posts of the Empire, which, as we have said before, had been greatly weakened on this side since Dacia had been annexed. After many sanguinary attacks the Goths finally attempted a genuine invasion (268 A.D.) with a very formidable host, and bringing their old folk and women in their train. But they again encountered a determined resistance from the Roman legions commanded by the Emperor Claudius. The latter informed the Senate that notwithstanding the

disorder in which the Empire had been left by his predecessors, and in spite of the lack of arms and of all that was needed for war, he was marching to defend his territories against a host of 320,000 Goths, who were already across the frontier, and was resolved to conquer them or perish on the field. The numbers of the foe were probably exaggerated, or may have also comprised the non-combatants. Likewise the fleet of 6,000 ships attributed by some writers to the Goths may be considered preposterous, and indeed other authorities reduce the number to 2,000. In any case it was an invasion on a scale such as had never been seen before, yet Claudius successfully repulsed and routed the foe in the two great battles of 268 and 269 A.D. The first of the two was fought at Naissus, in Servia, and was not a decisive victory. Nevertheless, even those who declared it to be a Roman defeat, admitted that 50,000 Goths were left dead on the field. In the second campaign the Roman cavalry kept the Goths hemmed in among the Balkan Mountains, where nearly all of them perished either by the sword, plague, or famine. A portion of the survivors found safety in flight, others were made prisoners or slaves, while some accepted service in the Roman ranks. Much booty was captured, and such a host of women that every legionary had two or three to his share. This is an additional proof that the Goths had planned a veritable invasion and not a mere raid. Then Claudius wrote again to the Senate saying: "I have routed an army of 320,000 Goths; I have sunk 2,000 of their vessels." These successes gained him the surname of *Gothicus*. But the great number of unburied corpses caused a violent epidemic of plague, to which he succumbed—a sacrifice, as it were, to his own prowess.

This victory was undeniably a fresh proof of the enormous strength still retained by the Empire. But it

also proved the inexhaustible strength of the barbarians, seeing that, in spite of such enormous loss of life, they continued their attacks without intermission. It is plain that their dead were quickly replaced by other tribes of different races, who flocked to their army from all parts. Claudius' successor, the Emperor Aurelian (270-75), a good soldier as well as a skilled politician, after opposing a valiant resistance to the Goths, finally came to terms with them and yielded Dacia to them of his own accord, on condition that they should keep to their own side of the Danube. The cession to the barbarians of this fertile and, by that time, almost thoroughly Romanised province, compelled the emigration of a great part of its inhabitants. Nevertheless, as Augustus had advised, the frontiers of the Empire could be now withdrawn to the stronger line of defence on the Danube. In fact Aurelian's action was generally approved; and there ensued a whole century of comparative peace with the Goths, only interrupted, during the reign of Constantine, by three wars, in which the barbarians were continually beaten, and finally with a loss, it is said, of 100,000 men by the sword, starvation, and cold.

This line of the Danube, however, having been so long left unfortified, was still the most vulnerable point of the Empire. The Goths in Dacia were already in great force, and their numbers always on the increase, from the continual accretion of fresh tribes—this, too, while there was likewise a growing contingent of barbarians in the army appointed to defend the Danubian frontier against other Germanic tribes.

CHAPTER III

REFORM OF THE EMPIRE—DIOCLETIAN AND CONSTANTINE — RELIGIOUS DISTURBANCES — ARIANS AND ATHANASIANS—NEO-PLATONISM — JULIAN THE APOSTATE — BISHOP ULFILAS AND THE CONVERSION OF THE GOTHs

THE continual dangers to which the Empire was exposed had frequently shown the urgent need of thorough reforms, which were actually carried out by Diocletian (284-305) and by Constantine (323-337). The first improvement required was the creation of firmer administrative and military unity, by concentrating all power in the hands of the Emperor, making him a genuine autocrat, and likewise endowing him with sacred attributes. In order to lighten the labours of the government, and, above all, to avoid the continual peril of a contested succession, Diocletian had summoned Maximian to a share in the government, with the title of Augustus, and then chose two other partners, Constantine and Galerius, with the lower title of Cæsars. This division of government implied no division of the Empire, over which Diocletian still retained supreme sway. On the decease of any one of the four rulers, the three survivors were bound to name his successor, and thus prevent, it was hoped, continual shocks and agitations. But in this respect the reform proved a failure ; for on Diocletian's

abdication the Empire was plunged in continual disturbances (from 305-323) until Constantine was elected sole Emperor and completed the most useful and essential part of Diocletian's scheme of reform.

The Empire was divided into four Prefectures, *i.e.*, of Italy, Gaul, Illyricum, and the East. The civil power was clearly separated from the military, and both were worked on parallel lines and equally in subordination to the supreme authority of the Emperor, who, with his attendant ministers, ruled over all. The Prætorian Prefects, having entirely resigned what military powers they had formerly possessed, were placed with exclusively civil functions at the head of the Prefectures, which were divided in Dioceses ruled by Vicars, and these Dioceses subdivided in Provinces under Presidents (*Præses*), as Consular Governors, or Correctors.

Then followed a long string of subordinate officials whose rank and attributes were most precisely defined, and who were distributed all over the Empire to supervise the administration of affairs and, above all, to accelerate the collection of taxes. The army was organised on the same system : with *Magistri militum* (*peditum ed equitum*), under whom were the *Duces* and *Comites*, and so on down to the lowest petty officer. This reform undoubtedly prolonged the existence of the Empire by strengthening the army and improving the discipline, order, and unity of every branch of the government. But it also led to heavier taxes, and to a more oppressive method of levying them ; it involved the Empire in a vast network of bureaucracy of which the evil and unavoidable consequences soon began to be felt. Rome had a special Prefect of its own (*Præfectus Urbi*) in addition to the Senate, which although retaining some of its former prestige, had no longer its old power. Thus, both Rome and Italy were reduced to the position of provinces, and

not only subject to the provincial government but likewise to the provincial land-tax. For some time past Rome had been only in name the capital of the Empire. In fact, Diocletian and his three colleagues made Nicomedia, near the Black Sea; Sirmium, west of Belgrade; Augusta Treverorum (*Trèves*), and Milan, their official abodes. The truth was that the necessity of defending the lines of the Rhine and the Danube, and even of the Euphrates, on account of the incessant war with Persia, had tended for some time to shift the Empire's centre of gravity towards the East, and this tendency had now become more openly pronounced.

As we have already said, Diocletian's scheme of reform was carried out by Constantine. The Christians suffered cruel persecution from the former Emperor, but Constantine, on the contrary, recognised the irresistible power of the new religion and solemnly adopted it, in the hope of strengthening the Empire by its aid. The only other event of his life of any real historical importance was the transference of the capital from Rome to Byzantium on the Bosphorus. The choice of the new capital, named Constantinople in his honour, was a very happy choice, for it was not only nearer to the Danube, and a commercial centre of the very first rank that could be easily provisioned from Egypt, but had great strategic advantages as an impregnable, natural fortress. The strength of the position was proved by the resistance it opposed for many centuries to the attacks of innumerable foes, while Rome, on the contrary, was frequently captured and sacked.

But this change of capital produced many varied results. Italy and Rome felt forsaken as it were, and cut off from political life. The union of Christianity with the Empire—both being of an universal nature—naturally gave rise to the conception of an universal Church, which

in fact was soon formed, and actually on the model of an Imperial institution. For Rome, being no longer the political capital, was now impelled, in memory of her past, to become the religious capital of the world. Her bishop was not content to be solely the successor of St. Peter ; but determined to be likewise the successor of Romulus and Remus, Cæsar and Augustus, by founding a religious empire equally vast, equally powerful, and of greater solidity than the political empire that was now crumbling to ruin. Rome was strongly seconded in this purpose by the Italian people, in whom the religious life began to manifest an activity that was soon to become so restless and so general as to be fused with the very existence of the whole nation. Unfortunately when Constantine, the head of the Empire, was converted to Christianity, he also claimed to be the head of the Church. He convoked and presided over councils, took part in theological disputes, decided them by force of his authority, and publicly announced his decisions. The Bishop of Rome could not tolerate this state of affairs for long, and, indeed, often disputed it. Thus were sown the first seeds of the strife that was to last through the Middle Ages. The State was soon in open conflict with the Church ; the religious feeling of the East, of the Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople with that of the West and of the Bishop of Rome, while the conflict was no little embittered by the great difference in the intellectual and moral temper of the two races.

A proof of this was speedily given by the theological dispute started between the Arians and Athanasians, which spread with the speed of fire from one end of the Empire to the other. It may seem very strange to us moderns that a subtle controversy on the Trinity should then have had power to excite men's minds to such a pitch. The question, however, touched not only a

fundamental tenet of Christianity but the conception of God and of the Divine relations with mankind. The Almighty is accepted by our reason as the First Cause, by our feeling as our good Providence, and this brings Him nearer to us, and endues Him with an almost human personality. Christianity satisfied this twofold need of man's mind, by acknowledging in God the Father the Creator of the Universe, and in Jesus Christ His Son the same God in the likeness of man who suffers death to redeem us from sin and give us salvation. The Greek spirit, as the genuine originator of the Christian theology, soon began to spin subtle distinctions, Arius maintaining, for instance, that the Son being created of the Father could not be one with Him, could not be *ab æterno*, but must have had a beginning, no matter how remote. This theory was hotly opposed by Athanasius, who had been trained at Alexandria in Plato's philosophy, which regarded the Almighty under His triple aspect as the first cause, the *logos*, or reason, and the animating spirit of the universe. Therefore Athanasius firmly upheld the conception of one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, that had been already introduced in the Gospel according to St. John, and made answer to Arius: "By your doctrine you deny the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Son is of the same substance (*homoousius*) as the Father." "And you," retorted Arius, "believe not in one God, but in two Gods." In those times Synods and Councils were held in rapid succession. Bishops and prelates were kept continually on the move, and to such an extent that, so it was said, even the posting service of the Empire was thrown into disorder. In the public streets and squares, in the churches and private dwellings the only topic discussed was that of God the Father, God the Son, and their identity or non-identity of substance. The Council of

Nicæa (325), convened by Constantine, proclaimed the Athanasian doctrine; but the East decidedly leaned to that of Arius. The latter's followers tried to arrange a compromise, and their efforts were seconded by Constantine, who, also for political reasons, did his best to maintain the religious unity of the Empire. A few persons calling themselves semi-Arians, held that the Son was not of one substance (*homoousius*) with the Father, but yet of a substance resembling the Father's (*homoiousios*). As Gibbon remarks, the whole difference was reduced to a diphthong, to one letter of the alphabet. But this did not serve to abate the heat of controversy. Others again, adopting the Sirmian formula—so-called after the place where it had been started—tried to avoid the disputed point by smothering it in vague generalities. Athanasius, however, would accept of no compromise, and rejected every attempt at conciliation. Calumniated and accused by his adversaries, persecuted by Constantine's son, the Emperor Constantius, deposed by the Patriarch of Alexandria, and driven into exile, he still continued his propaganda. When reinstated in his See, he resumed his special work with greater daring than before. One night (February 9th, 356, A.D.) his church was surrounded by the Imperial troops, but he remained quietly seated in his place, and disregarding the prayers of his flock who implored him to fly for his life, continued his reading of the Psalms. At last, when the soldiers advanced threateningly towards him, and only a few of the faithful still stood their ground, he suddenly vanished with them—by some miracle, it was said—and withdrew to the Thebaid, where he continued to preach his creed.

That a man of energetic, heroic temper should cling so firmly to his own faith, was neither an isolated nor even an extraordinary case in those times. But the great

historic value of the battle Athanasius so bravely fought, was the fact that he was backed by the whole Western world with Liberius, Bishop of Rome, at its head. This prelate openly championed his cause, denied that the Emperor had any right to depose him, and spoke as though the Church of Rome were already superior to that of Constantinople, and entirely independent of the Empire. When efforts were made to overcome Liberius by flattery, and rich gifts were sent to him, he ordered these offerings to be left at the threshold of St. Peter's, that the Lord's temple might not be desecrated by their presence. When an attempt was made to use force against him, so violent a tumult was roused that the Pope had to be hurried away secretly, and by night, to Milan. There large sums of money were offered to tempt him to renounce Athanasius. But he indignantly spurned the gift, saying: "The Emperor may keep his money to pay his soldiers." And to the eunuch who was pressing him to accept the gold, he added: "A thief such as thou to dare offer me alms, as though I were a criminal! Become a good Christian before venturing to address me!" So he elected to go into exile rather than yield to the imperial demands.

The Emperor appointed the Bishop Felix as his successor in Rome. But the people deserted the churches and never acknowledged him. When Liberius, broken by age and infirmity, was induced to adopt the vague Sirmian formula, the Emperor forced him to return to Rome, under the strange delusion that he could share the mitre with Felix, the anti-Pope. But the people, men and women, old and young, rose in furious revolt, all shouting: "One God, one Christ, one Bishop alone!" (357). And when Felix attempted resistance swords were drawn and he was driven to flight. Thereupon Liberius came back in triumph. But no one heeded the

fact of his having agreed to the Sirmian formula. In the eyes of Rome, his acceptance of it signified nothing.

This heated struggle brought many things to light. First of all, it was now clearly seen that the ever-practical spirit of the Roman Church was resolved to fearlessly maintain the firm unity of faith without accepting any sort of compromise, and resolved to avoid all the hair-splitting theological distinctions which, although marvellously suited to the more flexible Greek, were thoroughly repugnant to the spirit of the Latin tongue. So the Church strictly adhered to the doctrine that was destined to triumph, *i.e.*, to the Athanasian conception of the One and Triune God. It was also seen that the Bishop of Rome now assumed a totally independent position with regard to the Emperor, as head of the universal Church. In Italy, and more especially in the Catacombs of Rome, a new generation had sprung up, hopeful and full of daring that gave its support to the Bishops and feared neither the Emperor nor the imperial soldiery.

It cannot be denied, however, that the Arian and Athanasian controversy had split the Christian world into two camps. This fact was destined to smooth the way for an extremely curious scheme of some historic importance, that was started exactly at that time for the astonishing purpose of reviving Paganism. All of a sudden, with unexpected rapidity, a new philosophic creed was diffused among the most highly cultured classes in Rome. This was the so-styled Neo-Platonic philosophy imported from Alexandria, and chiefly due to Plotinus (205-270) and his disciple Porphyry. Expounding the philosophy of Plato by means of Oriental mysticism and symbolism, this new doctrine exalted the idea of the Divine element in the world and in the human soul, and declared that the supreme

happiness consisted in the contemplation of God, in whom the soul sought to be merged. While aiming, on the one hand, at revising and rehabilitating the worship of Pagan divinities, on the other, this creed plainly felt the influence of Christianity and by means of symbolism, attempted to harmonise it with a belief in heathen gods. It was a strange phenomenon, and a foretaste, as it were, of what was to occur in the fifteenth century, when Gemisthos Pletho also endeavoured, by means of Neo-Platonism, to revive the cult of the ancient gods of Greece. But the times were very different. In the fourth century Paganism was a stronger force and the Christian faith much more lively among the people at large.

It is certain that Plotinus preached his doctrines most fervently and obtained zealous followers in Rome. He held the goods of this world in supreme contempt, and deplored the existence of a body, since he considered it a hindrance to contemplation of the divine, although, according to his disciple Porphyry, this privilege was often conferred on him. The oracle had declared that his attendant genius was likewise divine. When Plotinus lay dying these were his last words: "I am making a last effort to unite that which is divine in me, with the divine element of the universe."

He came to Rome when forty years old and speedily gained an uncontested authority. All appealed to him as an arbiter, and dying men frequently entrusted their property and their families to his charge. The Emperor Gordian was one of his followers, among whom were even several senators, and one of these, Rogatianus, was so zealous in the new faith that, for love of it, he neglected his estates, gave freedom to his slaves, and rejected the highest offices. All this is an additional proof that there was still some moral force in the Pagan society of the decadence, although the fact is denied by many.

Nevertheless Neo-Platonism, even more than Stoicism, was a philosophic creed only fitted to evoke the enthusiasm of a few chosen spirits who were too deeply imbued with the ideas of the Pagan world to be able to accept the Christian creed outright.

One of these elect spirits was Julian, surnamed the Apostate, as having abjured the Christian faith in which he had been reared. A kinsman of Constantine and of lofty intellect, he was in course of time seized with a great admiration for Grecian poetry and mythology, plunged into Neo-Platonism, was initiated in the secret of the Eleusinian mysteries and began privately to sacrifice victims with his own hands to Venus and Apollo. During the first period of his public career (355-61), he bore the title of Cæsar and was in command of the legions in Gaul, where he won great glory by fighting the Franks and Alamanni and successfully driving them across the Rhine. He was proclaimed "Augustus" by his legions, and after the death of Constantine (October 5, 361), entered Constantinople with them on the 11th of December and immediately tried to reinstate Pagan worship there. But being likewise a philosopher, he proclaimed universal toleration, and thus won the favour of all those who had already suffered or feared persecution. Included in the number were the Athanasians of the East and the Arians of the West, who, thankful to be left unmolested for the moment, knew that the triumph of Paganism could not be more than a brief and fugitive phenomenon.

Julian's dream was political as well as religious. As *Pontifex Maximus*, he sought to restore the ancient divinities by means of Neo-Platonism, and determined—like a new Alexander the Great—to march to the conquest of the East. In the year 363, in fact, he led a formidable host against Persia, which was invariably

hostile to the Empire and now actually at war with it. After passing the Euphrates, and repulsing the enemy, he pushed on, in spite of endless obstacles, across an inundated region seamed with canals. Continually fighting and always victorious, he next crossed the Tigris, and in order to prevent his men from even thinking of retreat, burnt all the boats with which he had crossed the rivers, and marched into the interior of the land, now a deserted waste with its cities and crops reduced to ashes. There was no possibility of retreat, and Julian fought his way on triumphantly until he was mortally wounded on June 26, 363. But, even in his last moments, he remained true to himself, telling his friends he rejoiced that his spirit, freed from the flesh, was about to be reunited with God. He also prayed that the Empire might have a just ruler. His dream of conquest died with him, and he was succeeded by the very incompetent Jovian, who, in his haste to withdraw to Constantinople, ceded various provinces to the enemy, who had certainly won no success, and renounced the protectorate of Armenia, which had always been faithful to the Empire, and rather than be torn from it was now willing to undertake its own defence. He thus opened the door to the enemy, and with no personal gain, for he died in February, 364, before reaching Constantinople.

Another event, of which the results proved very serious, also occurred during the controversy between Athanasians and Arians, namely, the conversion to Christianity of certain Gothic tribes. This was subsequently followed by the gradual conversion of all the other barbarians. The Goths settled in Dacia for nearly a hundred years had speedily begun to feel the influence of Roman civilisation, which must have been already deeply rooted in that region. That such was the case is shown by the fact that, in spite

of German tribes having long dwelt there, and notwithstanding the harsh oppression exercised later by the conquering Turks, even now this region, although hemmed in by Magyars and Slavonians, still shows very visibly the enduring traces of the ancient Roman stamp. The country's very name of Roumania, its speech, history, and literature are so many confirmatory proofs. The Goths settled in Dacia also continued to keep in touch with the Empire. Thus they were gradually becoming civilised, though by very slow degrees, when at last a really great man arose among them, in their Bishop Ulfilas (311-381), who was the true inaugurator of their conversion and culture.

Ulfilas had spent his youth in Constantinople, where he learnt Greek and Latin and embraced the Christian faith. His whole life was subsequently devoted to making a translation of the Bible and to the conversion of his countrymen whose progress he also aided by teaching them the Gothic alphabet. His translation, some fragments of which still survive, is the oldest and most valuable monument of the Germanic language and literature. There has been much discussion and inquiry as to the reason for which Ulfilas adhered to the Arian doctrine instead of the Athanasian, especially as, until the Franks adopted Catholicism, all the other barbarian tribes likewise became Arians. Ulfilas, however, had joined the Christian Church at Constantinople, so was naturally trained in the Arian creed that prevailed there at the time. There is also reason to suppose that to the untutored Dacian mind, as indeed to that of all barbarians reared in coarse heathenism, it must have seemed easier to admit that Father and Son were of different substance, than to arrive, by means of Neo-Platonic philosophy, at the conception of the identical substance of God in Trinity and God in Unity.

But although the conversion of the Goths promoted their civilisation on the one hand, on the other, it increased their internal divisions and weakened their resistance to the Romans. In fact the Ostrogoth inhabitants of Eastern Dacia who penetrated into the interior of Southern Russia, all remained Pagans, like the Gepidi settled in Northern Dacia. But most of the Visigoths dwelling in the south-west part of the country and, accordingly, in contact with the Romans, became converts to Christianity. In addition to this religious division, a political split took place among the Goths. The Ostrogoths possessed a real sovereign in the person of Hermanric of the noble Amal line, and entitled as such to hold rule over all. But the Visigoths had separated from them and again subdivided. Some who were still Pagans were ruled by Athanaric, and were hostile to the Christianised Visigoths, who obeyed the rule of Fritigern instead, and maintained much closer relations with the Romans. Athanaric and Fritigern bore the title of Judges, possibly because, originally, they had been headmen of *Pagi*, *i.e.*, the dignitaries to whom Roman writers applied the name of *Principes* or *Magistratus*, and who were likewise administrators of justice.

With all these tribal divisions there seemed reason to hope that, in those regions at least, the safety of the Empire would be long assured. All the more so when, in 365, Procopius and Valens were at war, and a section of the Visigoths crossed the Danube to reinforce Procopius, Valens, having worsted his rival, succeeded, after repeated struggles with the latter's barbarian allies (367-69), in forcing them to accept peace and retreat to their own land. Then, however, events of so unexpected a nature, that no mortal mind could have foreseen them, suddenly changed the whole state of affairs.

CHAPTER IV

THE HUNS

ALL the various peoples with whom we have dealt so far, Greeks, Romans, Celts, and Teutons, belong to the Aryan group that, migrating from South-west Asia, poured into Europe by different routes. But there now appears upon the scene an entirely new race belonging to another great but substantially different group that is known to us under the name of the Turanian family. This race was to play a considerable part for some time in the destinies of the Empire.

In Central Asia there is a vast highland plateau stretching from east to west as far as the Ural Mountains, and situated between the Altai chain and that of the Taurus which branches off southwards. This highland region is populated by a medley of very different races. The Ugrian Finns occupy the western portion, the Turks, Mongols, and Mantchoos that trending towards the east. But in spite of many great and striking diversities all these hordes have the same customs and the same ethnological characteristics. Even their many different tongues are all monosyllabic and agglutinate. Owing to the severity of the climate and scarcity of food, with little water for irrigating the land and rendering it fit for the plough, the inhabitants are forced to lead a nomadic life, and dwell in tents surrounded by enormous herds of horses, cows, and in some parts other

animals as well. Meat and milk are their chief articles of diet, and their ordinary drink a liquor made from fermented milk. They are clothed in skins, live on horseback, and, when not fighting, are occupied in hunting wild beasts, such as boars, bears, and even tigers. The tent is their only home ; they have no houses, no villages, no towns. They are polygamous, and know no social bond save that of the family and the tribe. Nevertheless, different tribes readily combine, and on finding a valiant chief to take the lead, join together sometimes in enormous throngs. Being accustomed to a wandering life, and always prepared for war, it is easy for them to move on from one region to another with their women and children, waggons and tents. These races have often played a great part in the destinies of the world. From time to time we behold them pouring down from their highland plain, with the force of an avalanche, a mighty, devastating flood that sweeps everything before it. They form great empires which seem to master the world for a moment, then suddenly vanish as rapidly as they arose, to be replaced later on, in the same way, by other speedily formed states, which develop and disappear in a like fashion. Under the successors of Ghenghis Khan, we find the Mongols fighting simultaneously in Silesia and before the Great Wall of China. Their government was always military, being entrusted to many chiefs of armies, who had absolute power, and merely paid tribute to their supreme head. The same sort of government has been noted even among the Arabs—difference of race and temper notwithstanding—when they spread from Hindostan to Morocco, and thence to Sicily and Spain. It is an inorganic and primitive State-system that seems to have an infinite power of extension until the amalgamation of conquerors and conquered induces a process of decomposition, that also proceeds rapidly.

These Central Asian or Turanian races give no new ideas to the world, but often diffuse those of the other nations with whom they come in contact.

It seems as though Providence had preserved them in their original homes in a state of perennial youth and barbarism, in order to stir and reinvigorate the world when it was growing torpid and decadent. Among the members of this vast Turanian stock were the Huns, the reputed ancestors of the Avars and Magyars, who afterwards occupied Hungary, and still inhabit that country. They were Finns from the Ural Mountains. During the fourth century, being driven out possibly by other tribes of the farther east, they suddenly poured down southwards with incredible speed, inspiring general terror and causing many native tribes to take flight towards the west. In 374 the Huns fell upon the Alani in East Russia, and having crushed them, forced a certain proportion of the men to serve in their ranks; and with forces thus swollen pushed on to the Mæotian Swamp, or Sea of Azof, where they halted for a time before advancing against the Goths. The panic they excited wherever they appeared is clearly shown from the descriptions bequeathed to us by the chroniclers, and the legends related about them. Jordanes, the earliest Gothic historian, whose history is compiled from that of Cassiodorus, which was afterwards lost, speaks of these heathen, polygamous, nomad Huns in the following terms: "They are more barbarous than barbarism itself. They have no condiments to their food, nor use fire to cook it. They eat raw meat after having kept it for a while between their thighs and their horses' backs. They are of low stature, strong and agile of limb, and are always mounted; their visage resembles a shapeless lump of flesh rather than a human face, and instead of eyes shows only two glittering black specks. They have scarcely any

beard, since it is their custom to slash their children's faces with the dagger, so that babes may learn to endure wounds before tasting their mother's milk. A sword thrust in the ground is the god of their worship, and they live as animals in the likeness of men. Evil spirits and witches driven from Gothic forests gave them birth, and they were generated to wreak ruin on the Goths. The same evil spirits taught them what road to take on their march against the Goths. This was how the lesson was given : Certain Huns, while tracking wild beasts one day, sighted a strange doe who, flying before them, turned back from time to time as though inviting them to follow. So they followed on. After leading them to the Mæotian Swamp, and indicating an easy passage through it, the mysterious animal suddenly disappeared, thereby proving that it was truly one of the evil spirits hostile to the Goths."

At all events, it is certain that without any warning the Huns dashed down upon the Ostrogoths with such tremendous fury that all resistance was impossible. Hermanric, the king of the Ostrogoths, died by his own hand, and his subjects being completely routed, ended by joining the enemy's hordes. For eighty years they pursued this course, renouncing their national independence, but still united under their own chiefs. In this way the Huns continued to push forward in ever-increasing numbers, until they reached the banks of the Dniester, across which dwelt the Visigoths. Passing the river unexpectedly by night (376) they fell upon Athanaric's tribe, and excited so great a panic among them that part of the tribe sought safety in the Carpathians, while others fled to West Dacia, and there, joining Fritigern's Visigoths, infected them with their own terror. All were so maddened with fear that, although Fritigern was very brave, and is said to have had a force of 200,000

warriors, his only thought was to seek safety in flight with the whole of his people. No such spectacle has ever been seen again. This enormous army, with a host of old men, women, and children, with all their chattels on their shoulders and in chariots, a flying multitude, supposed to number a million, rushed to the Danube in order to cross it and find protection in the Empire. At first the Roman guards did their utmost to check this human inundation. Some of the fugitives, in fact, were thrust back into the river and drowned. But what resistance was possible when a million human beings of either sex and every age pushed forward, imploring mercy with raised hands, all trembling, blinded, and maddened with a deadly terror that served as a stronger impetus than the highest courage? Fritigern declared that he and his people were ready to serve under the Roman eagles on any terms. But how could the Romans believe his word? Who could tell what might happen? Yet, who could refuse?

At that time Valens was Emperor of the East, having been admitted by his brother Valentinian to partnership in the Empire, and after quelling the revolt of Procopius, his power seemed assured. But he was of a weak and vacillating character, and on seeing the impossibility of checking the flood of panic-stricken fugitives, he was deluded by the idea that the acquisition of a host of 200,000 men would be useful to the Empire. Accordingly he permitted the tribes to cross the Danube on condition that they came disarmed and gave hostages. But how could stipulations of any kind be enforced in that tremendous confusion? How, too, could victuals be found for this sudden influx of a million human beings? At first some attempt was made to count and disarm the new-comers. But it was soon abandoned perforce. Some of the fugitives were already in the last stage of exhaustion,

others, regardless of orders, pressed forward clamouring for food. The Roman officers took advantage of this to begin selling them provisions of any kind, however bad or tainted, at very high prices. And to satisfy their hunger the Goths eagerly gave their money, stuffs, and chattels—everything, in fact, save their weapons. It is even recorded that certain of them were persuaded to sell their wives and children as slaves rather than see them perish by famine.

Thus a million barbarians, of whom 200,000 bore arms, were within the borders of the Empire. The way had been opened to them, not by bravery or conquest, but by panic and flight. Nevertheless they had passed the barrier, and were famished, suffering, and excited to wrath by all the violence and injustice they had suffered. The valiant Fritigern immediately began to call his soldiers together, and re-establishing discipline, endeavoured to revive their self-respect and self-confidence. He was seconded in these respects by the arrival of more Visigoth and Ostrogoth tribes, who had crossed the river on purpose to join him, and likewise by the sympathy almost openly manifested towards his people and himself by the barbarians incorporated in the Roman legions. In a short time Fritigern and his men moved on to Martianopolis, the capital of Moesia, about seventy miles from the Danube. There the Goths soon showed that they were united and able to win their daily bread by force of arms. Then it was recognised that the worst consequences might ensue from Valens' unlucky mistake in admitting those wild tribes within the limits of the Empire. But, in any case, how could he have prevented so impetuous a torrent from breaking its banks and flooding the land?

Great distrust was soon shown on both sides. We are told that when the Roman general Supicinus invited the

Gothic chiefs to a banquet they came, fearing treachery, with a numerous escort. In the course of the meal a sudden clamour was heard of Goths and Romans fighting outside. Thereupon Fritigern immediately drew his sword and flew to place himself at the head of his men. Soon afterwards a skirmish took place (377) a few miles from the city, in which Supicinus and his imperials were beaten. That day, writes Jordanes, put an end to the barbarians' calamities, and to the security of the Romans. There is some truth in this. The battle itself was of little importance, but its moral effect was enormous. The tribes who had entered the Empire as fugitives imploring compassion and help, had suddenly changed into a threateningly aggressive host that was raiding all Thrace at will. Nevertheless, when they invested Adrianopolis they were easily driven off, since before the invention of firearms the walls of a city almost always presented unconquerable obstacles to a besieging force. When the Goths withdrew to the Dobrudscha, the Romans made an onslaught on their entrenched camp, barricaded by carts and baggage, with a furious valour worthy of ancient times; and a second battle was fought which, being indecisive, had to be followed by a third.

During these events the Emperor Valens was engaged in a campaign against the Persians, but on hearing of the revolt of the Goths he patched up a hasty peace in order to hurl his troops upon them. At twelve miles from Adrianopolis, on the 9th of August, 378, a great and decisive engagement was fought, in which the Roman soldiery gave splendid proofs of valour, but, owing to the incredible folly of their leaders, were doomed to defeat. After a long march, under a blazing August sun, they met the foe in so narrow a gorge that all were jammed together, and it was impossible to use their weapons freely. Forty thousand Romans faced death heroically. Valens

was in the field, but as his fate was never known various accounts have been given of his end. The defeat was a serious one, and certain writers, with considerable exaggeration, have compared it with that of Cannæ. At any rate, when the Goths renewed their attack on Adrianopolis, where the Imperial treasure was guarded, they were repulsed with an energy that surprised them, and when they beat a retreat, sacking by the way, and marched on to the assault of Constantinople, they received a still severer lesson ; for the well-mounted Saracen cavalry in the service of Rome pursued them at lightning speed, and pounced down upon them with the fury of savages. One Saracen, riding stark-naked, was seen to gallop after a Goth, unhorse him, cut his throat, and drink his blood. This deed struck terror into the barbarians, by proving that others could outstrip them in savagery.

CHAPTER V

THEODOSIUS

IN the East, therefore, there was no longer an Emperor, and the army had suffered defeat. In the Empire of the West, Valentinian I. had been succeeded by his son Gratian, who had been compelled by the legions to take into partnership his step-brother Valentinian II., a child of four years, and accordingly under the regency of his mother Justina, the fame of whose charms was only surpassed by the still greater beauty of her daughter Galla. Gratian assigned to Valentinian—or rather to the Queen-mother reigning in his stead—the government of Italy and of Africa. Meanwhile he was opposing a valiant front in Rhoetia and Gaul, against the barbarian advance in those regions. But stringent measures were required for the protection of the East where the danger was greater and more pressing. Convinced of the gravity of this state of things and of the general anxiety it inspired, he adopted the very wise plan of selecting Theodosius to share his power as Emperor of the East. A native of Spain, which had already given birth to the great Emperors Hadrian and Trajan, Theodosius was noted for his prudence and military skill. Accordingly his election was hailed with great favour by all.

The new Emperor promptly took up his quarters at Thessalonica, as a good strategic position, where, after

assembling and reorganising the army, he tested the mettle of his troops in a series of successful skirmishes which raised their confidence and lowered that of the Goths. Also, when the latter began to split up, on the decease of their chief, Fritigern, Theodosius profited by the opportunity to foment their dissensions by allowing some of the chiefs to join his flag, and showering so much favour on them as to win the reputation of being a friend of the Goths. Thus he was enabled to arrange a treaty of capitulation with them in 382, by which they were allowed to settle permanently in Thrace, on the footing of *fœderati*. Of the exact nature of this arrangement, in all its minute details, no information has come down to us. The Goths remained in Thrace as friends of the Empire, as recognising its supremacy and pledged to take arms in its defence if required. Houses were given them, and land to cultivate, while the fighting men received payment in money or grain. They were not incorporated in the Imperial army, but remained a united and separate people under chiefs of their own. Herein lay the danger. Nevertheless, if it be remembered that Theodosius found them armed and aggressive foes raiding the country at their will, also that it was no longer possible to drive a million of human beings across the Danube, and still less possible to destroy them, the treaty he had arranged was a wise and statesmanlike act. Such indeed was the general verdict. But meanwhile the Empire was sheltering a viper in its bosom. These barbarians who might rise in revolt at any moment, served as perpetual enticements to others who came across the river in small groups at a time, or were deserters from Roman legions, or fugitive slaves.

Thanks to his prudence and firmness, Theodosius had no trouble, save of this sort, from the Goths for the rest of his life. His good fortune increased from day to day,

whereas Gratian seemed an altered man ; for the latter neglected the government, and showed such excessive fondness for his barbarian soldiery as to arouse the jealousy of the Roman legions who, accordingly, deposed and put him to death after choosing Maximus as his successor (383). Maximus, however, aspired to be ruler of the whole Western Empire, and although at first on good terms with Valentinian II., soon fell out with him. Hastening over to Italy he drove the latter to fly with his mother and sister to Constantinople, where they appealed to Theodosius for help. Theodosius hesitated at first, having already too much on his hands. But feelings of gratitude bound him to the family of Valentinian I. Besides, he loved the sister of Valentinian II., whom he afterwards married, and meanwhile she joined with her mother in imploring him to avenge their wrongs. Accordingly, in 388, we find Theodosius at the head of his army, inflicting a repulse upon Maximus on the banks of the Save, and subsequently defeating and killing him at Aquileia.

Justina was then enabled to return to Italy with her son, Valentinian II., now aged seventeen. This youth meanwhile was entirely dominated by the Frankish leader, Arbogastes, who, having fought very bravely for him at Aquileia, and having slain the son of Maximus with his own hand, now claimed the right of playing the tyrant. Valentinian opposed his pretensions, and prepared to dismiss him. But the insolence of the Frankish soldier rose to such a pitch that the Emperor lost patience and rushed at him with drawn sword meaning to kill him on the spot. He was held back by his attendants ; and shortly afterwards (May 15, 392) he was found dead. Some supposed him to have committed suicide, but according to other authorities, he had been murdered by the followers of Arbogastes. The Frankish general was a heathen, and

the first barbarian who dared to assume the power, though not the name, of a Roman Emperor; but, as will be shortly seen, his example was frequently imitated later on. Nevertheless, as was always the case with these barbarian usurpers, he did not venture to mount the throne or to take the title of Emperor. He chose instead the rhetorician Eugenius, who was forced to assume the purple and act as his tool. In fact, although a Christian, Eugenius seconded Arbogastes, by favouring the Pagans, who were still somewhat numerous in Rome. By this means he hoped to create a party in opposition to Theodosius; but, on the contrary, it only increased the latter's strength. Theodosius, indeed, was now impelled to make war, not only by political motives, but by Galla, his wife, who was burning to avenge the murder of her brother Valentinian, and also by the bishop's clergy and people, who urged him to defend the Christian faith. Hence he decided to go to war; but, appreciating the distinguished valour of the Frankish chief and his mastery of his men, Theodosius employed two years (393-4) in preparations for the campaign. Hostilities were farther retarded by the death of the Empress Galla (May, 394), who had given him a daughter named Galla Placidia, possessing even greater charms than her beautiful mother, and who, after passing through a series of startling vicissitudes, was fated to become a great political force in that century of corruption.

As soon as the first shock of bereavement was over, Theodosius finally started on his campaign at the head of a formidable army. Among other contingents, this comprised twenty thousand *federated* Goths led by their best generals, and also accompanied by the youthful Alaric, who was destined to do greater deeds and achieve great celebrity. Pursuing the same route as on his march against Maximus, Theodosius came in touch with the

enemy on the banks of the river Frigidus, at a point equidistant from Ernona (Laibach) and Aquileia. The battle raged for two days, with varying results. Finally, however, being favoured by the fierce "Bora" wind that prevails in those parts, and which luckily blew full blast in the enemy's face, Theodosius obtained a complete victory (September 6, 394). Eugenius was captured by the soldiery, who cut off his head on the spot, while Arbogastes, on seeing all hope was lost, died like a Roman, by throwing himself on his own sword. This signal success had important historical results ; for thus the whole Empire was united under the sway of Theodosius, and he ruled it with an iron grasp. At the same time, having destroyed the last remains of the Pagan faction, he was likewise enabled to reconstitute religious unity by the triumph, both in the East and the West, of the Athanasian doctrine, to which he had been steadily faithful from the beginning of his reign. These facts determine the value of that Emperor's position in history, and justly won him the title of Theodosius the Great.

By his firm adhesion to the orthodox creed he was able to bring the Empire and the Church into an even closer alliance than the Emperor Constantine had achieved. That the Church was greatly benefited by this union, and made rapid progress, is shown by the large number of ecclesiastics of equal eminence in morals and doctrine she then had in her service, such as St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose, the famous Bishop of Milan. This was also the period when that latin system of theology was being built up which may be truly said to combine religion, philosophy, and ecclesiastical discipline. The chief object of that system is the firm maintenance of the unity of faith and of the universal authority and political power of the Church. Another great personage of the same period was Damasus,

the Bishop of Rome, who succeeded to Liberius in 366. He ascended the episcopal chair in the midst of a furious riot, and speedily proclaimed the principle of the superiority of the Roman Church over all other Churches, and that ecclesiastics could only be amenable to ecclesiastical courts.

But although the union of the Church with the Empire gave strength to both, it contained the germs of future dissensions, as was proved even in the reign of Theodosius. This Emperor was much given to luxury and expense for the purpose of enhancing the dignity and splendour of his position. But all this demanded an increased taxation that led to repeated revolts.

At Antioch, during one of these outbreaks, the statues of the Emperor were cast down and his name was insulted. On this occasion he treated the rioters with clemency. But later on, in 390, a far graver revolt took place at Thessalonica, when the imprisonment of a charioteer of the Circus served as a pretext for the rising. A general of the Empire and several officials were murdered, and their bodies ignominiously dragged through the streets. Theodosius, who was in Milan at the time, was so enraged by the news that he ordered an exemplary, or rather ferocious, chastisement, which fell alike on the innocent and the guilty. It is said that seven thousand persons suffered death, and certain writers declare the number to have reached fifteen thousand. In any case, torrents of blood were shed. It was then that St. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, addressed to Theodosius a letter, still extant (Ep. 51), in which he censures the massacre, and calls the Emperor to repentance, inasmuch as it would be impossible, he says, for him to grant admittance to the temple of the Lord or participation in holy rites to one who had stained his hands with the blood of so many innocent persons.

Certainly St. Ambrose was one of the most remarkable characters of the age—one of those who proved what power and ascendancy the Church was attaining in Italy. The descendant of an illustrious Roman family, Ambrose began by filling high political posts, and then, in 374, was raised to the See of Milan, where he was adored by the people. In 386 he had the honour and happiness of converting St. Augustine to Christianity. The strength of his faith was only equalled by the indomitable energy of his character. In 385 he refused to grant the Empress Justina the use of any church in his diocese for the Arian cult. On that point he was absolutely inflexible. The Empire, he declared, could dispose of earthly palaces, not of the Lord's house, where force is of no avail. When Goth soldiers were sent to threaten him, he faced them on the threshold of the church, asking if they had implored the protection of the Republic in order to invade the House of God. Also when Priscillian's heretical followers were massacred he severely blamed the Emperor for the deed. No less severe was his censure when the same Emperor ordered him to rebuild a synagogue that had been burnt by the populace. On this occasion the Bishop wrote to him saying that were he to obey such an order he would be a traitor to his office. No house must be rebuilt in which our Lord Jesus Christ was denied. He repeated the same words in church when the Emperor was present, adding that the Emperor was bound to grant liberty of speech to the priest, who is forbidden to conceal his thoughts. This mode of proceeding tallies perfectly with the epistle mentioned above concerning the massacre at Thessalonica.

Certain writers have added that when Theodosius attempted to enter the Basilica, St. Ambrose arrested him on the threshold and said to him, "Art thou blinded so far by thy earthly power? Forget not that thou too art

mortal, and must therefore return to the dust and give account to God of thy deeds. The souls of those thou hast slain are as sacred as thine own." Then, in order to bend the Bishop's indomitable spirit, Theodosius is supposed to have sent to him his minister Rufinus, the man who had incited the Thessalonican massacre. At first this Rufinus tried to win the Bishop by flattery, but on receiving an indignant rebuff, declared that the Emperor would enter the church all the same. To which St. Ambrose replied, "He must first pass over my corpse." Legend has sought to colour a real incident by means of these minute details; and certainly they help to portray the character of the hero. Before entering the church Theodosius was obliged to make submission to St. Ambrose and do penance (December 25, 390) by repeating the 19th Psalm, ver. 25: "Help me, O Lord my God. O, save me according to Thy mercy." Undoubtedly nothing could be nobler than the heroic firmness displayed by the prelate. It also affords visible proof of the extraordinary power then assumed by the Church, and how it was forming in Italy a new generation of men to whom the future would belong. But if a Bishop of Milan could defy the Empire in such wise, what might the Pope not dare? The history of the Middle Ages gives sufficient answer to this question. Thus, while the seeds of coming strife were lurking in the union of Church and Empire achieved by Theodosius, no less peril was brewing for political affairs in general. This began to be realised after the death of Theodosius in Milan, at the age of fifty, on the 17th of January, 395—an event that occurred about four months after the great battle by the Frigidus that seemed to have assured the permanent stability of the Empire. Theodosius certainly had found it menaced by foes, torn by divisions and in a state of disorder; he had succeeded in reorganising, reuniting, and pouring

new life into it. But, unfortunately, this renovation could be only ephemeral. Persia, the Danube, and the Rhine had always threatened danger, and that danger was always on the increase.

The Goths were in Thracia in arms, and always in greater numbers. It had needed all the Emperor's vast energy and prestige to maintain the equilibrium between these diverse and jarring forces, which were ready at any moment to come to open conflict. His success in trimming so difficult a balance justly entitled him to be called Theodosius the Great ; but an iron hand and a powerful brain were demanded for the continuance of his work. Both were lacking when he passed away, and his two equally incapable sons succeeded to the throne of the Empire.

CHAPTER VI

ARCADIUS AND HONORIUS—RUFINUS, STILICHO, AND ALARIC

EVEN in Diocletian's time the Empire had been nearly always divided in various parts, ruled by different emperors who were more or less subordinate to one of the number. This division of power, which was not incompatible with the unity of the State, had been originally suggested by the great difficulties to be met by any single ruler in governing the whole Empire and providing for its defence against enemies simultaneously attacking it on all sides. Theodosius, as we have seen, was strong enough to unite the entire realm under his own sceptre, but left it divided between his two sons at his death, assigning the East to Arcadius, and the West to Honorius, but without any intention of forming two separate Empires. Unfortunately this division of the government had to be carried out under unexpected conditions, which altered its character and finally led to the complete separation of the two Empires.¹ The election of the emperors was managed in many different ways, although always with the participation of the army, but even in Constantine's time, and more

¹ "Arcadius Augustus . . . et Honorius Augustus . . . *commune imperium, divisia tantum sedibus, tenere coeperunt*" (P. Orosius, vii. 36). Marcellinus repeats almost exactly the same words.

notably in that of Valentinian I., the hereditary principle had come in force, every endeavour being made to restrict the succession to the same family. It was to this end that Theodosius had taken his two sons into partnership, and now these two sons were his successors and entirely independent of each other. Both, however, were still minors, Arcadius being eighteen, Honorius only ten years of age, and therefore both were unfit to assume the reins of government. Aware of this, Theodosius had left the elder to the guardianship of his chief minister, the Prefect Rufinus; the younger to that of the brave General Stilicho, *Magister utriusquæ militiæ*, a Vandal who had fought in his service against Eugenius with glorious success, and to whom he had entrusted the defence of the Empire. Thus the two infant emperors were not only independent of each other, but placed in the care of two such equally ambitious and powerful men that no harmony was possible between them. This state of things produced unavoidable difficulties in the future.

The government was still organised on the system established by Diocletian and Constantine. Four Prætorian Prefects were the respective heads of the four Prefectures, *i.e.*, of Italy, her islands, and Africa; Gaul, with Spain and Britain; Illyricum; the East. At Constantinople, as at Rome, there was a Prefect of the City and a Senate, but the latter institution was rapidly losing its political significance and sinking to the level of a Municipal Council. The Prefectures were divided into Dioceses, and these again into Provinces, which were subdivided into Municipalities organised like that of Rome with their Senate or Curia and their populace (*plebs*). These were the only institutions destined to survive the general dissolution of the Empire, although with substantial alterations. Side by side, as we have already seen, with the civil administration, came the military hierarchy, with its *Magistri peditum*

and *Magistri equitum*, two offices often combined in one person, who was styled in that case the *Magister militum*, or *Magister utriusque militiæ*. The number of these high military officials often varied ; in the Eastern Empire as many as five may be found. In Italy it was not unusual to find a *Magister utriusque militiæ*, and Stilicho held that office at the time of which we write.

Naturally, this twofold organisation, civil and military, proceeding on parallel lines, was intended to be subject to the supreme will of the Emperor alone. But this was no longer possible with two untrained and independent sovereigns, and with the jealousy and antagonism of their appointed guardians ; in addition, Rufinus, a native of Gaul, was crafty, ambitious, grasping, and cruel, and in virtue of these characteristics had mounted, step by step, to the highest honours. It being his task to find money for the administration and the army, he had been forced to increase the taxes, and was accordingly hated by the people. But, as he was Prætorian Prefect for the East, with his seat in the capital, having acted as Prime Minister to Theodosius after this monarch had reunited the East and the West in the last years of his reign, Rufinus now claimed the right of directing the general policy not only of the East but also of the West. Stilicho, on the other hand, having helped to re-establish the ancient unity by force of arms, and still commanding the army he had led to victory in that cause, had the full confidence of his legions. Besides, Theodosius had given him his own niece, Serena, to wife, and on his death-bed—according to the general rumour—had charged him to watch over both his sons. Accordingly, while Rufinus claimed the exclusive direction of the Imperial policy, Stilicho asserted his right to have the supreme command of all its forces. Also, while Rufinus, as head of the administration, represented the Romans, the barbarian

Stilicho, as head of the army, was the natural representative of the barbarian element that preponderated in his host. Hence the two principal personages of the Empire were unavoidably leaders of opposing parties—a situation bound to bear evil fruit before long.

Undoubtedly Rufinus had the more difficult position of the two, since, although he held the purse-strings, Stilicho wielded the sword. To fill the purse, taxes must be levied, and taxes bred hatred. There were intrigues brewing against him, even at Court, and all the more now that Arcadius, being much older than Honorius, already showed impatience of his guardian's inconvenient and permanent yoke. He proved this by marrying Eudoxia, the daughter of a Frankish general, a girl famed for her beauty, whose praises had been sounded to him by the eunuch Eutropius, *Præpositus sacri cubiculi*. This marriage was intended to spite Rufinus, who wished his own daughter to become the Emperor's bride. Nevertheless the minister's authority was still very great, as was presently shown.

The federated Goths being stirred to discontent by the absence of accustomed grants of money, and their leader, Alaric, being still more aggrieved by failing to obtain the title he coveted of *Magister militum*, they began to scour the land, rioting and plundering wherever they went. Thereupon Stilicho marched at the head of the army to quell the revolt; but Rufinus ordered him, in the name of the Emperor Arcadius, to reserve his energy for the affairs of the Western Empire alone, and to send back to Constantinople all troops belonging to the forces of the East. Now the latter consisted, for the most part, not only of barbarians, but of Goths. However, Stilicho being forced to obey the order, despatched the men forthwith, under the command of Gainas, a Gothic leader, who is said to have joined him in a plot against Rufinus, in

which Eutropius, the eunuch, was likewise concerned. However this may be, when the soldiers were encamped near Constantinople, and Arcadius, with Rufinus in attendance, was passing them in review on the 27th of November, 395, the minister suddenly found himself cut off and surrounded. Then a soldier rushed at him, and crying, "Stilicho strikes thee with this sword," killed him at a stroke. The body was then hacked to pieces by the mob. Some of the men stuck his head on a spear and carried it in triumph through the camp; while others brandished one of his arms with the hand extended as though demanding more taxes.

The murder of Rufinus greatly increased the power of Eutropius, who succeeded to his office; indeed the barbarians again seemed masters in Constantinople, having managed to obtain all the higher military and civil posts. This fact, however, provoked a strong reaction of Roman feeling. The rhetorician, Synesius, undertook to make this known to the Emperor, and urged him to "assume the command of the army like the Cæsars of old; to forbid the barbarians from invading the Senate, to forbid them to don the toga they despise, to forbid them from flocking into the legions and stirring up revolts which imperil the Empire." In conclusion, he added that "the army should be of Romans, who would defend their country." Nevertheless Gainas and the Goths still retained great power. It is true that the influence of Eutropius, who had been nominated Consul in 399, was also much increased; but the eunuch, being hated by all, was at variance with the Empress and Gainas. The latter contrived to have him condemned to death, and then, assuming the post of *Magister utriusque militiæ*, actually became the chief power in Constantinople. But the very fact of his predominance roused the national party to fiercer reaction

than before, and the strife grew still hotter when religious antagonism was added to the clash of politics.

At that time the Bishop of Constantinople was St. John Chrysostom, a man of great influence, great firmness of character, and likewise immutably faithful to the Athanasian doctrine, which, thanks to Theodosius, was the dominant creed in the diocese. The barbarians, however, were Arians, and accordingly Gainas, their chief, was indignant that there should not be any church in the capital of the East dedicated to their form of worship, and that they should be obliged to use one outside the city walls. All this, however, was strictly in accordance with the laws and regulations of Theodosius ; so Chrysostom refused to make any change, had those laws read to Gainas, and reminded him that, having entered the service of the Empire, he was bound to respect its decrees. But both parties being equally stubborn, the public feeling became so inflamed that on the 12th of July, 400, a very violent riot broke out against the barbarians. Many were killed, others had to fly from the city, while Gainas, defeated and pursued, sought safety in Dacia by escaping across the Danube with a few of his men. But the Huns put him to death, thinking to win favour thereby from the Empire. This was the most notable event of Arcadius's reign, inasmuch as, Constantinople being thus freed from barbarian hands, the Eastern Empire resumed its former Greco-Roman character, and maintained the same to its fall, while the Emperor was enabled to carry on the government with the support of the orthodox, national party. Nevertheless the federated Goths had still to be reckoned with, for they had occupied Thrace, spread into Moesia, and now, reinforced by all the disbanded fugitives from the army of Gainas, were becoming more and more mutinous, because for some time past they had received no pay.

The question was how to deal with such a host of malcontents and a whole threatening nation in arms.

Even during the time of Rufinus a plan had been conceived in the East to drive Alaric and his tribes into the Western Empire. Thus the former realm would not only be saved from an ever-present danger, but work would be cut out for Stilicho. Care was to be taken, however, to prevent any chance of the two barbarian generals making common cause against Constantinople ; as also the risk of Stilicho deciding to make serious war on the Goths, and, by successfully vanquishing them, becoming more powerful than before. It was for this reason that, shortly after the death of Theodosius, Rufinus had checked the general's progress by depriving him of a portion of his army. On the other hand, although a trusty soldier of the Empire, Stilicho was none the less of barbarian blood, and could not wish, even had he the power, to exterminate the Goths altogether. Neither would it be advisable for him to humiliate them too deeply without thoroughly routing them, inasmuch as that would only render them increasingly hostile and dangerous to Arcadius and Honorius. Hence Stilicho would have preferred to show them that he had the strength to keep them down, and then, according to the plan conceived by Theodosius, would have incorporated them in the Empire and thereby increased its power. By this method his military and political position would have been notably improved ; but that was precisely the result Constantinople most wished to prevent. Accordingly for some time, while the East was urging the Goths towards the West, the West invariably sent them back again : thus they were shuttlecocked, so to say, from one Empire to the other.

Naturally the tribes grew more and more incensed. Therefore, about the year 395 (the date is uncertain),

they finally elected a king of their own in the person of Alaric, who from his earliest youth had fought bravely under Theodosius in Italy. He was of the noble line of the Balthei, a name that Jordanes translates as audacious or daring (*id est audax*), and answering, in fact, to the English word "bold." After being trained to the discipline of the Roman legions, he was now raised aloft on his countrymen's shields as their king—an event of much importance, inasmuch as it again welded the federated Visigoths into a constituted nation, or at all events into an independent army within the Empire. Accordingly Constantinople was more anxious than before to get rid of these barbarians by pushing them still farther west. Only, again, there was Stilicho also in command of a formidable army, enabled to do what he chose with it, owing to Honorius's weakness of will, and therefore strong enough to hold his own. In fact, when Alaric advanced into Greece, devastating the land (396), Stilicho immediately took the field against him, and, driving him from the Peloponnesus, blockaded him in the mountains. Already he seemed to have the invader at his mercy; but, on the contrary, it was suddenly known that Alaric had managed to slip away through Northern Epirus with all his army and plunder. Many different rumours were current at the time. Some said he owed his escape to a skilful movement; others attributed it to negligence or treason on Stilicho's part; while according to another version it was the result of a secret agreement with Constantinople. At any rate, Stilicho returned quietly to Italy without attempting to follow him up, and Alaric withdrew to a part of Illyricum that appertained to the Eastern Empire. There he remained by the permission of Arcadius, who likewise granted him the coveted rank of *Magister militum*.

Thus the Goth sat astride, as it were, between the East

and West, and had every facility for resuming the route he had turned away from for a time. Meanwhile he was able not only to feed his men, but also to provide them with plenty of weapons from the Imperial stores.

A descent into Italy had now become his fixed idea, and this for many reasons. Constantinople urged him thither, in order to be finally quit of himself and his host. After the national revolt of July 12, 400, and the destruction of the barbarians, the East was no longer a safe or pleasant abode for the Goths. Besides, Alaric was also attracted to Italy by personal ambition and the spirit of adventure. The legend runs that an inner voice was always crying to him, "*Penetrabis ad urbem!*" It is difficult to determine what plan he had conceived; probably he scarcely knew it himself. Alaric was a daring soldier, but without real military or political genius. Like most of the barbarian generals of the period, who, having no country of their own, chiefly made war for personal ends, he resembled the soldiers of fortune of later times. But the fact of being at the head of a multitude of soldiery, with a numerous following of old men, women, and children, imposed upon him many duties and heavy responsibilities. It is impossible he could have dreamt of becoming Emperor of the West. He would not have known how to rule it; and besides, a similar idea would have seemed almost sacrilegious to a barbarian of his day. Hence he simply pushed forward, threatening and devastating as he went, always with the hope of finding some way of gaining a regular and permanent footing in the Empire.

Meanwhile Stilicho's strength and authority in Italy had been greatly increased, especially since he had succeeded in quelling Gildo's revolt in Africa (398). He had married a niece of Theodosius, and his daughter Maria was the wife of Honorius; also, in the year 400

he was raised to the rank of Consul. Accordingly he was considered in the light of a possible pretender to the Empire—if not for himself, for his son ; hence, while his authority had increased, so did the number of his foes. By sheer force of circumstances he had become, as it were, the natural defender of Italy. Therefore, at the first tidings of the barbarian advance, he hastened into Rhoetia and repelled an invading host under the command of Radagaisus, who appears to have acted in concert with Alaric. Stilicho then levied as many recruits as he could find, and, with his forces thus increased, made a descent into Northern Italy. Here his first task was to secure the safety of Honorius, who was then at Asti and in danger of being completely surrounded by the enemy. He persuaded the Emperor to transfer the seat of government from Milan, where he had generally resided, to Ravenna, which, besides greater facilities for defence, had the advantage of being a seaport. Accordingly, from 402 to 475 Ravenna was the fixed capital of the Western Empire, and afterwards became the capital of the Exarchate, as being the best point of communication with Constantinople.

Now, however, measures of defence had to be taken against Alaric, who was pressing forward with an enormous host. Accordingly Stilicho recalled the twelfth legion from Britain, and, what was far more serious, also summoned back the legions guarding the Rhine frontier, thus opening a door on that side to other invaders. His object was to provide against the more imminent danger, thinking that, Alaric once conquered, it would be easy to repulse other barbarian hordes, and possibly with the co-operation of Alaric himself. On the 6th of April, 402 (but even this date is not authenticated), the two armies came in contact at Pollenzo, on the Tanaro, twenty miles from Turin, and a pitched battle ensued. It was during the Holy Week ;

but, regardless of this, Stilicho took the enemy by surprise while celebrating the rites of the Church in camp. The victory was his, but the Goths effected their retreat without molestation. Again, after a second defeat, near Verona, they withdrew to their own parts without being pursued. This naturally led to rumours of treachery. Nevertheless, in 404, Honorius made his triumphal entry into Rome, accompanied by Stilicho. It was to celebrate this occasion that those gladiatorial games were held which had been so often—though vainly—prohibited at the instance of the Christians. This time, however, an Eastern monk named Telemachus threw himself between the combatants in the arena of the Colosseum and tried to separate them in the name of Jesus Christ. He was stoned to death by the crowd amid howls of wrath; but it is averred that the inhuman games were stopped from that day. The monk's daring attempt was another proof of the growing energy developed by the Christian spirit.

After Alaric's retreat, Radagaisus, who had been previously beaten in Rhoetia, again advanced with an army of 200,000 men, according to Orosius—and of no less than 400,000, according to other chroniclers—which shows how little credence can be given to their figures. At any rate, a very large army poured down into Tuscany, where Stilicho met it, drove it to the hills above Fiesole, defeated and starved it out, capturing the chief, Radagaisus, who was afterwards put to death (405). All the rest of the army perished or fled, wandering in all directions in search of food. But this victory, instead of enhancing the glory of the captain who had won it, only swelled the clamour of accusation against Stilicho, especially when news came that hordes of Alans, Sueves, and Vandals had crossed the Rhine, swept into Gaul (406), and were marching onward unmolested.

People said that if Stilicho found it so easy to crush Radagaisus, it was plain that at his will he could do the same with Alaric. But being a barbarian himself, he naturally preferred to leave the Empire at the mercy of barbarians. That was the reason why he recalled the legions from the Rhine, throwing Gaul open to the foe who would soon be invading Spain as well. Honorius should take example of his brother Arcadius, when the latter rid himself of Gainas who, had he not been destroyed with all his followers, would have made the Goths masters of the Eastern Empire, which had again become Roman instead. Unless similar precautions were taken in the West, all Italy, and Rome itself, would be soon subjected to barbarian rule.

All the Roman portion of the army was so inflamed with these ideas that in 407 the legions occupying Britain proclaimed a new Emperor, whose sole title to that dignity was his name of Constantine, but who afterwards showed unexpected force of character. He promptly hastened over to Gaul to combat the barbarians; but it was no longer possible to drive them back across the Rhine. Nevertheless, he managed to re-fortify the line of the river, so as to prevent the passage of other hordes. Meanwhile fresh legions from Italy were poured into Gaul by Honorius to re-establish his authority in opposition to that of the "tyrant," as Constantine was styled, from the alleged irregularity of his election. Thus there were two Emperors in the West fighting against each other and against the barbarians as well. The blame of all this was laid upon Stilicho; and therefore he was increasingly hated and slandered. In fact, notwithstanding the energy he had displayed in his victorious campaign against the Pagan chief, Radagaisus, men accused him of favouring the Pagans, and of aspiring to make his heathen son the Emperor of the West. Later

on, at the death of Arcadius (May 1, 408), it was asserted instead that he proposed to exalt him to the throne of the East. Not satisfied, men cried, with having given his daughter Maria in marriage to Honorius, he had induced that monarch, after her decease, to take his other daughter, Thermantia, to wife, heedless of the fact that the Christian clergy forbade marriage with a deceased wife's sister. In short, every weapon was used against him, and the end was achieved of making him equally detested by Christians and Pagans.

Worse still, the Emperor too was now stirred to jealous suspicion. Owing to a certain traditional susceptibility with regard to his Imperial authority, he could barely tolerate this Vandal who had excited the general aversion of the Roman nationalist party. Hitherto, however, he had concealed his feelings, and his natural weakness of character kept him in a state of indecision. After the battle of Pollenzo he seemed to approve of Stilicho's plan, namely, that of allowing Alaric to retain, subject to the suzerainty of Honorius, the entire Prefecture of Illyricum, although that province had been divided for some time past between the Eastern and Western Empires. Stilicho considered that this measure would pacify the Goths and place the whole of Alaric's army at his own disposal, and that with Alaric's aid he could re-establish order in Gaul and Spain by combating not only the barbarians but Constantine's usurped power there.

In accordance with this plan, Alaric had already moved away from Epirus, when his march was unexpectedly arrested by special orders from Honorius. Naturally the Goth was most indignant at this, and advancing towards Italy in a menacing attitude, demanded four thousand pounds' weight of gold as an indemnity for the outlay he had incurred. Thereupon Honorius was seized with alarm, authorised Stilicho to present and second Alaric's

demand in the Senate, with the declaration that it must be granted, since there was no means of resisting it. Accordingly the Senate also was compelled to yield ; but for one moment a spark of the old Roman spirit and vigour was fired, and the Senator Lampadius seemed to express the general feeling by his cry of protest : "*Non est ista pax, sed pactio servitutis !*"

In point of fact Stilicho was a barbarian, but a Romanised barbarian. From the union of the contrary elements constituting his personality, both his strength and his weakness were derived. Those elements co-existed in the Empire, and so long as they could keep their balance in it and continue to exist side by side without clashing, Stilicho's personality was representative of the world in which he lived. Herein lay his strength. His idea of making use of the Goths for the Empire's advantage might seem a combination of the policy that Theodosius had followed and urged him to follow in the hope of his having the will and power to maintain it. But at the first clash of conflict within the Empire of the two elements on which it was based, Stilicho's personal force in politics was bound to be destroyed and he was doomed to succumb. At this moment the conflict may be said to have actually begun. In fact, in spite of obtaining the demanded indemnity, the Goths remained discontented and threatening. On the other hand, the indignation of the Roman party had risen to boiling-point, and it was hinted that the sacrifice of Stilicho was absolutely required for the good of the Empire. Of course there were many to fan the flame, and among them was one Olympius, an officer of the Imperial Guard. The Roman legions then stationed at Ticinum (the modern Pavia) were, as it seems, precisely those destined to resume the war against Constantine and the barbarians in Gaul, where all was in disorder,

Accordingly, at Pavia, every danger, everything that went wrong, was laid to the charge of Stilicho, who was then at Bologna.

His object, said these accusers, had been to save the Goths at any cost ; he had purposely left the Rhine frontier undefended, in order that barbarians of his own kind should flood the Empire—as, in fact, they had flooded it. Honorius was in Pavia precisely at that time and a violent riot suddenly broke out there (408). The city was sacked ; Stilicho's friends were put to death ; and the Emperor, whom no one molested, looked on passively, probably knowing beforehand what was to happen.

On hearing of the revolt, Stilicho was about to hasten from Bologna at the head of his barbarian troops to protect Honorius and quell the rebels. But on learning that the Emperor was in no danger, and showed no sign of disapproving the deeds committed under his eyes, he considered it his duty, as a general of the Empire and devoted to its service, to abstain from provoking a sanguinary conflict between one portion of the army and the other. But this scrupulousness caused his own troops to revolt, for they panted to defend their leader and avenge the fate of their comrades. The outbreak was so fierce that the general himself ran great risk of death, and had to take refuge in a church at Ravenna. Then messengers came from Olympius demanding his surrender, solemnly swearing that they were ordered to arrest him, but that his personal safety was assured. However when Stilicho gave himself up on the strength of this pledge, his captors declared that later instructions ordered his death. The few followers clinging to him declared their willingness to fight for him to the last. But he saw that resistance would be useless ; even in that emergency he considered the welfare of the Empire rather than his own safety, and shrank, as a dying man, from provoking civil

war. Accordingly he commanded his men to lay down their arms, and decided to surrender. On the 23rd of August, 408, he quietly laid his head on the block. His son was killed in Rome, his daughter Thermantia was sent back from the Imperial palace to her mother, Serena, who was fated to suffer a very cruel death in Rome shortly afterwards. Most of Stilicho's kinsmen and friends, and, above all, many of his barbarian soldiery, were persecuted to the death, even their wives and children being slaughtered. Then, as though to crown these dark deeds, Honorius published an edict against all heretics, whom he prohibited from joining the Palatine Militia, and proved his bitter dislike for the Pagans by confiscating the property of their temples, and ordering their altars to be cast down.

The first consequence of this terrible tragedy was that a large number of barbarian soldiers, about thirty thousand, it was said, flocked to join Alaric's army, which thus suddenly became more powerful and menacing than before. The question was, what did he propose to do with it? It was impossible that he should dream of overthrowing the Empire, or of mastering it. He had never declared himself its enemy. But, being at the head of an armed multitude that had to be fed, he and his followers were resolved in some way or another, and by some legal and recognised method, to obtain a firm footing in the Empire; for Alaric was quite ready to serve the Empire, and help to re-establish its authority over the rebels in Gaul or elsewhere, taking the rank of *Magister utriusque militiæ*. But the fulfilment of this scheme would have left the Empire at the barbarians' mercy, and to that Honorius would by no means consent. Despite his weak and vacillating temper, he was the son of Theodosius, therefore conscious, in some degree at least, of the dignity of his position, and aware that, should he

concede Alaric's demands, he would find it difficult to resist similar requests later on from other barbarian hordes. Now, too, consent seemed less possible than ever, since the successful revolt against the barbarian party at Pavia, and since Constantine, at the head of his legions, was threatening to detach Gaul, Britain, and Spain from Italy. Such were the great difficulties in the way of any practical solution—difficulties involving the Empire in the gravest peril.

Meanwhile Alaric was continuing his advance through Italy, determined to lay siege to Rome and dictate his own conditions. In fact, as soon as he had seized the mouth of the Tiber and the port of Ostia, the Eternal City, being unprovisioned for a siege and with no army to defend it, was speedily brought to the verge of famine, and likewise assailed by the plague. So Rome was compelled to come to terms; but Alaric's conditions were so hard that the inhabitants, maddened with despair, threatened to issue from the gates *en masse* to fight for their lives. "The thicker the hay, the easier to mow it," the barbarian is supposed to have said, and instead of offering milder terms, his claims grew more exorbitant. "What then will be left to us?" cried the Romans. To this he replied, "Bare life!" Nevertheless, all details regarding this period are so uncertain, and always so exaggerated in one sense or another, that one cannot give full credence to similar anecdotes; especially when we remember that, although a rough and ferocious barbarian, Alaric did not wish to be considered an enemy, much less a destroyer of the Empire. But he had to find sustenance for himself and his men, an armed host in the grip of famine. Therefore Rome was forced to pay a tribute of five thousand pounds in gold, thirty thousand in silver, together with stores of silken stuffs and drugs. In order to satisfy the barbarians' claims the Romans had

to melt down the statues of their ancient gods and the ornaments of their Pagan temples. This was not only a cruel humiliation ; but many declared it to be of evil omen, inasmuch as some Pagans still survived, and even among the Christians there were many who trusted in the help of the idols who had been so long the protecting guardians of Rome.

The minds of men were staggered on beholding the ancient capital of the world reduced to a strait hitherto deemed impossible, but that was, however, to be surpassed by other and more cruel humiliations. It was at this time, it would seem, that the unhappy Serena was put to death, charged, on the strength of being Stilicho's widow, with friendship towards Alaric. It was alleged that this inhuman deed was perpetrated at the instigation of Galla Placidia, the daughter of Theodosius, celebrated for her wonderful beauty. But this princess was little over eighteen years of age at that moment, and although one may easily believe that the sister of Honorius would be hostile to Stilicho and his kin, it is scarcely credible that at so tender an age her mind should have been sufficiently perverted or her influence sufficiently great, to stir the people to an act of revenge.

It cannot be said that Alaric abused his power, even in the hour of triumph. On the contrary, he tried to come to an arrangement by renouncing many of his previous pretensions. He no longer insisted on becoming *Magister utriusque militiæ* ; he was content to accept the province of Noricum for himself and his people, instead of the vaster and more fertile territories he had originally demanded. Honorius, however, hoping that now Arcadius was dead, he would be able to restore harmony, if not union, between the East and the West, and also awaiting the reinforcements he had asked from Theodosius II., rejected all idea of coming to terms. Even the sight of the

devastations committed by hordes of fugitive slaves and disbanded barbarians from the Imperial ranks, could not avail to conquer his obstinacy.

Thereupon Alaric lost patience, and realising that nothing was to be done by negotiation, invested Rome for the second time, and tried to combine with the Pagans and Arians in the city, all of whom were incensed by the recent edicts issued against them by Honorius. Further, he proclaimed a new Emperor in the person of a Greek named Attalus, then Prefect of the City of Rome (409). He expected this man to be the docile instrument of his own will, and hoped to induce him to forward his pretensions with some show of legality. On the contrary, however, no one seemed to take Attalus seriously. Even Honorius, although somewhat alarmed at first and ready to take flight, regained his courage on the arrival of a few thousand men sent to him from Constantinople, and felt sure, with their aid, of being able to hold out safely at Ravenna. Besides, Alaric could conclude no agreement with Attalus, who, being a Greek, naturally shrank from leaving Rome and the Empire a prey to barbarians, although unable to adopt any decided course on his own responsibility. Meanwhile Rome was suffering so greatly from famine that the mob yelled after the Prefect : "*Pone pretium carni humanæ.*" Probably they meant to say, "Must we devour one another?"

Therefore Alaric, being convinced that even Attalus was of no use, finally pronounced him deposed, and stripping him of the Imperial insignia, sent these back to Honorius, with whom he again fruitlessly tried to make terms. It was then that he decided on the most daring act of his life, and one destined to have a dread result of vast importance in the history of the world.

On the 24th of August, 410, either by treason or stratagem, Alaric entered Rome by the Salarian Gate, without

encountering any resistance. It was a novel deed, such as had never happened, never been deemed possible for eight hundred years. Accordingly it excited so much wonder that all were stupefied, and even the Visigoth king seemed so scared by his own act that at the end of three days he hastily evacuated the city. Undoubtedly no barbarian host, practically coming as conquerors, could occupy Rome without committing much violence, much plundering. But from all that can be accurately learnt, we are led to believe that far less violence was perpetrated than might have been supposed, or than was afterwards rumoured. The palace of Sallust, near the Salarian Gate, was immediately burnt down, but there is no certain knowledge of other acts of incendiarism, though probably some occurred. All the anecdotes given in chronicles and legends merely tend to prove the great respect Alaric showed to Christians, Christian churches, above all to the Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul, and to rights of sanctuary. In fact, all who took refuge in consecrated places were left unmolested. Also, outside the churches even, all Christians, especially those vowed to the religious life, or in charge of holy things, were respected by the Goths, in pursuance of the imperative orders issued by their chiefs. Orosius, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome speak with horror of this sack of Rome, but regard it as a just chastisement inflicted by God on the faithless who were still unconverted and looked for aid from their Pagan idols. To those early writers Alaric seems merely an instrument of the Divine wrath, his entry into Rome destined to hasten the triumph of Christianity ; they likewise acknowledge that he dealt far less destruction than might have been supposed, and far less than was recounted by many.

Meanwhile Honorius remained shut in Ravenna, where the Pope was also staying, having gone there in vain for

the purpose of trying to negotiate terms between Alaric and the still hesitating Emperor. As an additional proof of Honorius's indifference and sloth, it is related that, on receiving the terrible news that "*Rome has perished*," he thought the message referred to a pet cock of his that he called Rome, so exclaimed in reply, "How can that be possible, when I have just fed him with my own hands?" This anecdote, however, is given by Procopius, who wrote a hundred and fifty years later, and is not always a trustworthy authority when treating of past events.

At any rate it is certain that after three days' halt in Rome, Alaric marched on towards Southern Italy, devastating the land and advanced to Reggio in Calabria. There he made preparations to embark for an unknown destination. Some writers declare that he was bound for Sicily, others, for Africa, since this being the granary of the Empire, he might thus have been enabled to force the latter to arrange tolerable terms with him. In a moment, however, all his schemes were upset. The ships that were to have conveyed him across the straits were all wrecked, while he himself fell ill suddenly and died (410). His followers, we are told, turned the river Busento into another channel, and after burying him in the dry bed, allowed the stream to run over it again, so that no eye might behold the tomb of their valiant chief.

CHAPTER VII

FROM THE DEATH OF ALARIC TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE VISIGOTH KINGDOM IN GAUL

ALARIC's decease entirely altered the aspect of affairs. The Goths chose as his successor his brother-in-law Athaulfus, who was still less desirous to oppose the Empire. We have the valuable evidence of Orosius to this effect. This writer relates that he met a comrade of Athaulfus who repeated what he had heard from the chief's lips. Alaric's successor had said: "At first, it was my intention to make myself master of the Empire, and assume the dignity of a Cæsar Augustus, transforming the Roman land into the land of the Goths.¹ But experience soon convinced me that this would be impossible, inasmuch as Rome's domination over the world had been established not only by force, but by law and discipline as well. For the uncontrollable barbarism of the Goths makes them incapable of obeying laws, yet without laws *Respublica non est Respublica*. Therefore I intended, by the armed force of the Goths, to restore the ancient glory of the Roman name. Unable to be the destroyer of the Empire, I wished to regenerate it by peace."

Another fact had doubtlessly conduced to inspire him with these feelings. Alaric had carried off many prisoners

¹ "Esset, ut vulgariter loquar, Gothia quod Romania fuisset, et fieret nunc Athaulfus quod quondam Cæsar Augustus" (vii. 43).

together with his spoils. Among his captives was the celebrated beauty Galla Placidia, born of a race of specially lovely women, who in virtue of their charms, as we have already observed, had a great share in the fate of the world. Her grandmother, Justina, had ruled her husband, Valentinian I. Their daughter Galla won the heart of Theodosius I. Now, Galla Placidia, the offspring of that union, being carried in captivity to Calabria, Athaulfus fell desperately in love with her, and desiring to win her in marriage, was moved to become more and more Roman. It is certain that as soon as he was elected king, Athaulfus forsook the idea of conquering Sicily and Africa and marched his people back to Gaul, where he hoped to find a suitable place of settlement for them, by consent of the Empire with which he desired to establish friendly terms. His idea was, in fact, the same that was always reappearing under different forms, namely, that of bringing about a species of union between the barbarians and Romans, by inducing the latter to accept the Goths as a concomitant part of the Empire, and to use them for its defence. Theodosius, Stilicho, and even Alaric, all cherished this idea; that Athaulfus also should have it was by no means surprising. It is quite true that Honorius had proved restive to it; but at the point which public affairs had now reached even he might be willing to adopt the plan he had previously rejected more than once.

In fact the whole Prefecture of Gaul was in a state of positive chaos, and seemed on the verge of complete separation from the Empire. After Stilicho had withdrawn the legions from the Rhine frontier, the barbarians, as we have noticed, had poured into Gaul in great numbers (406); and then Constantine presently appeared in that country, after having been proclaimed Emperor in Britain. This leader did not succeed in driving back the barbarian

flood, but after seizing the region now known as Alsace-Lorraine, he was, at least, enabled to prevent fresh incursions by occupying many cities of Gaul and subsequently even many Spanish towns, although some parts of both provinces remained in the barbarians' power. The truth was that since Stilicho's death and that of Arcadius in 408, military discipline had been steadily declining. All the generals had become more or less soldiers of fortune; they often went off separately, each one acting on his own account, and favouring fresh pretenders to the Empire who always received support from some section of the army. Thus, after Constantine's election in Britain, Maximus was proclaimed in Spain. Thus the Prefecture of Gaul harboured two pretenders to the purple, and a vast multitude of barbarians, who sacked the country and exacted heavy fines. Honorius despatched an army to Gaul under the command of Constantius, a valiant leader who made a vigorous effort to re-establish the legitimate Emperor's authority. Then Maximus, being deserted by his followers, took to flight; Constantine was besieged in Arles, driven to surrender, and, together with his son Julian, handed over to Honorius, who, violating the pledges given by his own general, had both of them killed (411). Thus the two pretenders having disappeared from the scene, there should have been only the barbarians left. The latter, however, had already put forward a new claimant to the Empire in the person of Jovinus, the moment Constantius withdrew to Italy. So they were again raiding the land in every direction.

In this state of things, Honorius could not object to Athaulfus's expedition to Gaul. First of all—and this was the great point—it rid Italy of the Goths. Besides, as Athaulfus went with a declared intention of occupying the country, he would have to fight Jovinus and the barbarians supporting him. This serves, at least partially,

to explain the very curious fact of Athaulfus being able to traverse the whole of Italy from south to north without encountering, as far as we know, any sort of hindrance on the way, and indeed without any details being recorded of his lengthy march. On first entering Gaul (412) he hesitated a while, but then advanced to the attack and killed Sarus, a Visigoth leader in the service of Rome who had gone over to Jovinus. Immediately afterwards Athaulfus marched against Jovinus and his brother; overcame and killed both, and sent their heads to Honorius, who displayed them to the people in Carthage. Shortly before, in that African city, another rebellion had been quelled, which had exercised some indirect influence even in Gaul.

Meanwhile Athaulfus became increasingly enamoured of the fair Galla Placidia and wished to make her his wife. But Honorius detested the idea of yielding to a barbarian the sister and daughter of Emperors, and all the more because his own general Constantius was likewise desperately in love with her, and he would have bestowed her more willingly upon him. Then too, Athaulfus was so very eager to come to an agreement with him, that now, his love-passion notwithstanding, he seemed disposed to send the Princess back to Ravenna, after Honorius had promised to give him plenteous stores of corn, of which his army stood in urgent need. But as the rebellion in Africa prevented the Emperor from fulfilling this promise Athaulfus felt relieved from all obligation to him. Accordingly he presently seized Narbonne, Toulouse, and Bordeaux on his own account, and attempted to capture Marseilles as well, but was frustrated in this purpose by Bonifacius, another brave general in the service of Honorius (413).

What was still more decisive, instead of carrying out his plan of releasing Galla Placidia, Athaulfus made her

his wife in Narbonne, in the month of January, 414. This marriage was a matter of grave historic importance, and so, too, the manner of its celebration ; for on that day the daughter of Theodosius and sister of Honorius, not only gave her hand to a barbarian, but the wedding was solemnised with thoroughly Roman splendour in the house of Ingenuus, a leading citizen of Narbonne. Athaulfus, the barbarian, appeared draped in a Roman tunic. The bride wore a splendid costume of Roman fashion, and at her feet knelt a *cortège* of fifty youths, each holding a salver in either hand, one heaped with gold pieces, the other with jewels and precious things—part of the booty from the sack of Rome—and now offered to her, the most precious of all booty, who was no longer the captive, but the Queen of the Goths. To heighten the solemnity of this curious ceremony, Latin verses were sung. What, too, was stranger still, the director of the chorus was no other than Attalus, that sham Emperor whom Alaric supported for a time but afterwards deposed. He had been compelled to follow the Gothic camp as a hostage to be turned to account when required. Now he led the singers at the wedding of Athaulfus and Galla Placidia ! All this was symbolic of that union between Goths and Romans which, after being the dream and desire of so many, was to be finally realised in some degree by Theodoric. A son named Theodosius was the fruit of the marriage just described, but he died in early infancy.

For different reasons Honorius and Constantius were both highly displeased with what had happened, so they joined in thwarting the Goths in various ways, and particularly by using every possible device to prevent Gaul from being provisioned by sea. Accordingly Athaulfus was induced to cross the Pyrennes into Spain, since that country being rich, fertile, and so far undrained

by invaders, he would find there less difficulty in feeding his army. But an assassin's thrust suddenly put an end to his life in 415. The crime was either one of the acts of vengeance usual to barbarians or the work of the party opposed to the victim's Roman proclivities, and specially angered by the numerous affronts now received from Italy. At any rate the new King elected was Sigeric, who hastened to prove his hatred of Rome and of his predecessor's memory by slaughtering the children born to Athaulfus by his first wife. He dared not kill the widowed Galla Placidia ; but he treated her most harshly, compelling her to march twelve miles on foot among the other prisoners, and in front of his own horse. But his reign soon came to an end, for he was killed in a week. His successor, King Walia, was of gentler fibre, and soon concluding a treaty with Honorius, gave up Galla Placidia to him, together with Attalus—a deed that was rewarded by the gift of 600,000 measures of corn for his host. Honorius then celebrated his eleventh consulship by making a triumphal entry into Rome and bringing Attalus with him bound to his chariot wheels, he then condemned him to have two fingers of his right hand cut off, and relegated him afterwards to the Lipari Isles. Now, too, Galla Placidia, who had shrunk at first from the idea of marrying her faithful lover Constantius because he was a rough soldier whose mind was absorbed in military matters, was finally induced to become his wife. Two children were born of this marriage, first a daughter named Honoria, and before long a son, Valentinian (419), afterwards known as Valentinian III. Constantius was made Honorius's partner in the Empire ; consequently Galla Placidia received the title of Augusta, and later on, after the death of her husband (421) and that of her brother (423), became regent for her infant son.

Meanwhile Walia had carried out the pledges he had given by winning several victories over the Vandals and Alaric in Spain. He then settled permanently in Gaul with his Goths (419), re-occupying various cities formerly held by Athaulfus, including Bordeaux and Toulouse. In fact the name of the latter city was given to the new Visigoth kingdom, now constituted with Honorius's consent, and which afterwards extended across the Pyrennes. As we shall presently see, this kingdom played a prominent part in the war the Western Empire was to undertake against the Huns. Narbonne, however, which Constantius considered to be an indispensable strategic point for the Romans, and also Marseilles, were retained by them. To the north and the east the land was overrun by other barbarians.

This may be called the finale to the first act of the tragic drama that began when the Huns drove the Goths over the Danube. As soon as Thracia failed to afford sufficient means of subsistence for all of them, a considerable contingent marched off under Alaric in search of new lands, and after prolonged wanderings and much fighting finally settled in Gaul. Yet, although this was at last arranged by consent of the Empire, it proved, nevertheless, the preliminary of the final separation from Italy of the whole Prefecture of Gaul. In fact Britain, which formed part of its territories, was already evacuated, and on the point of being subjected to barbarian invasions. Spain, too, was now invaded, and the successive expeditions undertaken for the purpose of reconquering it led to nought, save the temporary success of Belisarius. With the exception of a small stretch of territory to the south, the whole of Gaul proper was in barbarian hands, therefore, likewise, destined to be parted from Italy for ever.

CHAPTER VIII

GALLA PLACIDIA — INVASION OF AFRICA BY THE VANDALS

AFTER Alaric had marched away from Rome the aspect of affairs there improved. Many citizens who had fled now returned there, and accordingly the population rapidly increased. At Ravenna, on the contrary, seeds of party discord began to sprout up, and an unavoidable crisis was at hand. Honorius jealously clung to his independence of Constantinople, where the traditional feeling of the unity of the Empire was far keener, and where the supremacy of the East over the West was the end constantly kept in view. Theodosius II., who then reigned at Constantinople, although practically under the rule of his sister Pulcheria, had greatly disapproved of the promotion of Constantius to partnership with Honorius. But that warrior died before long, and his widow Placidia, being the child of Theodosius the Great, so strongly desired an agreement with the Eastern Empire, that she found it impossible to remain on good terms with her brother. Accordingly, she repaired to Constantinople, and stayed there till the death of Honorius in 423.

This Emperor was not a man of great ability, but not so worthless as some have declared. He practically represented three ideas, and these typified his reign: the hereditary principle, the Roman idea, and orthodox

Christianity. To these he was always faithful. Weak though he was, he had to struggle perpetually against the barbarians invading the Empire on all sides, and had to contend with numerous pretenders who were always starting up. Theoretically, the whole Western Empire obeyed his rule ; but in reality, Central Europe and all Gaul were already held by barbarian tribes. His policy aggravated, instead of diminishing, the friction with Constantinople. But Placidia, who was sharper-witted than he on that point, opposed his policy. She comprehended that only from Constantinople could help be obtained to stem the invasion of the vast barbarian hordes threatening the Empire in every direction.

This was why Ravenna was split into two parties at the death of Honorius. The party in favour of the independence of the West, chose John, the *Primicerius Notariorum*, as successor to the throne. But the other party, aiming at concord with the East, where Theodosius II. had already assumed the authority of a sole and absolute Emperor, favoured the nomination of Placidia as regent for her son, Valentinian III., in order to maintain the hereditary principle. For this reason also the two best generals in the service of the Western Empire, Bonifacius and Ætius, whose birth and valour had won them the title of the two last of the Romans, were now opposed to each other. Bonifacius, who was in Africa at the time, declared for Placidia, and immediately sent reinforcements and supplies to her aid, whereas Ætius declared for John. All the old bonds of military discipline were now relaxed, and generals took sides according to the dictates of personal interests.

To avoid the appearance of desiring to break off all relations with the East, John had sent to Theodosius II., praying him to recognise his claim ; but learning meanwhile that the Emperor had already declared for Placidia,

he carefully prepared for defence, and even collected a fleet in the port of Ravenna. Before long the news of the very bad reception accorded to his envoys at Constantinople showed that his precautions were more than justified. With no hope of obtaining any soldiers from Gaul, which was occupied almost solely by barbarians, nor from Africa where Bonifacius was in command, and expecting scant assistance even from Italy, where his enemies were many, he despatched Ætius to ask aid from the Huns, among whom that general had gained many friends during his prolonged detention as a hostage. In fact, Ætius soon returned with a force of Huns, said to number 60,000, and arrived in time to encounter the troops sent from Constantinople to Placidia's aid. Fortune seemed to be on his side, for the fleet bearing part of the Eastern army was scattered by a sudden storm, and their general, Ardaburius was cast ashore in the port of Ravenna and made captive. But although a prisoner he managed to brew a conspiracy in the city itself, and established communications with his comrades in arms who were advancing by land, under the command of his son Aspar. Thus, when John was on the point of issuing from Ravenna to make a frontal attack upon the foe, while Ætius and the Huns took them in the rear, Aspar was enabled, through his father's machinations, to enter Ravenna by surprise and capture John himself. The latter was taken to Aquileia, where Placidia had already arrived, and promptly put to death (425). Thereupon Ætius, in spite of having already engaged the foe in a fierce though undecisive skirmish, saw that his cause was lost, and went over to Placidia, who received him with open arms. He induced the Huns to withdraw by paying them a large sum of money, and Bonifacius, being still away in Africa, remained Commander-in-chief at the Court of Ravenna for seventeen years.

Theodosius II. received the news of John's death while attending a performance at the Hippodrome in Constantinople. He immediately ordered the games to be suspended, and led the people to the Basilica to offer solemn thanksgivings to the Lord. He restored to Placidia the title of Augusta, of which Honorius had deprived her, and bestowed that of *nobilissimus* on Valentinian III., while entrusting him to his mother's care, as he was barely six years of age. Later on, he raised him to the rank of "Augustus," sending him at the same time the Imperial purple and diadem. Thus the Empire was again split in two after being united, at least apparently for a time, under the sway of Theodosius II. Now, for a quarter of a century (425-450) Valentinian, or, strictly speaking, Placidia, governed the realm that still bore the name of the Western Empire, although many of its territories were already held by barbarian tribes who gradually proceeded to appropriate other portions, until Italy alone remained in the Emperor's possession.

The antagonism that had always existed between Ætius and Bonifacius grew keener and keener now that both were in the service of Placidia. Equally brave and equally ambitious, Ætius was the craftier of the two; Bonifacius, on the contrary, being extremely excitable and capricious. The latter had served the Empire admirably in Africa by keeping the Moors in check. On the death of his first wife he wished to withdraw from worldly affairs in a fit of religious fervour; but St. Augustine dissuaded him from this purpose for the good of the Empire. Then, taking a second wife, of the Arian persuasion, he entirely changed his mode of life, gave himself up to sensual delights, and so thoroughly neglected the province he governed that it was almost at the mercy of the barbarous African tribes. Things reached such a pitch that St. Augustine sent him stern

letters, reproving him for his neglect: "*Nec aliquid ordinas ut ista calamitas avertatur.*" Accordingly he was recalled to Italy (427), but refused to obey the order; and when an army was sent over to enforce his submission, opposed armed resistance. Thus a sort of civil war was carried on in Africa between the generals of the Western Empire.

We know the legendary account of this affair given by Procopius, who attributes the entire blame of it to Ætius's jealousy of Bonifacius. In order to ruin the latter, Ætius is supposed to have informed Placidia that Bonifacius was betraying her. If she desired proofs, let her summon him to Ravenna and she would find that he would stubbornly refuse to obey. At the same time he is said to have secretly warned Bonifacius that Placidia was plotting to overthrow him, and for that purpose would invite him back to Ravenna. Hence, when the order of recall came, he not only refused obedience but, in revenge decided on the fatal step of inviting the Vandals of Spain to cross over to Africa. But by the time they arrived his friends had made him aware of the trap into which he had been betrayed, and, repenting his blunder, he tried to drive the Vandals back to Spain. But it was now too late, and, after all, he was obliged to return to Ravenna. There he met his rival Ætius in personal combat, and was killed by him. Before drawing his last breath he advised his wife to marry the victor, should the latter be left a widower, inasmuch as Ætius was the only man he deemed worthy to succeed him.

The legendary character of this narrative is visible at first sight, and recalls many other legends of the same sort. In fact, according to one of these, even the invasion of Gaul in 406 was caused by Stilicho's treason, as, later on, the descent of the Longobards into Italy was a mere act of revenge on the part of Narses. The same method is

always followed of attributing events of a general character to exclusively personal motives, and although such motives undoubtedly occur in history, they are not the only factors. The truth is that, at the moment of the African crisis, Ætius was fighting for the Empire in Gaul, so that whatever plots or intrigues were being woven at Ravenna, he could have had no hand in them. In any case, even this explanation is unnecessary, seeing that the outbreak of hostilities between the Roman generals in Africa may have well sufficed to stir the Vandals to invade a country that was the granary of the Empire. Then, too, Africa was not only exposed to revolts of Moorish tribes, but likewise sorely harassed by the heretical sects of the Donatists, who denied the efficacy of baptism when that rite was performed by any priest who had sinned, and also harassed by the so-called *Circumcelliones*, troops of vagabond fanatics who excited the populace. All these sects being persecuted by the edicts against heretics proclaimed by Honorius, and therefore bitterly hostile to orthodox Catholics, naturally sided with all who attacked them, as, for instance, with the Vandals who were bigoted Arians. Thus, without excluding the theory that in the midst of the turmoil caused by civil and religious warfare, the Vandals may have not only received encouragement from some quarters, but have been actually summoned across the sea, there is the very natural explanation that personal interest moved them to invade Africa in 429 and to occupy Mauretania as they advanced towards the East.¹

The Vandals were closely akin to the Goths, with whom they originally dwelt in the regions between the Elbe and the Vistula. Thence migrating southwards, they took

¹ Everything connected with the coming of the Vandals and of Bonifacius's share in the matter was again carefully sifted by Professor Freeman in the *Historical Review* of July, 1887.

part in the wars of the Marcomanni against Marcus Aurelius. But after this they remained tranquil for a long time, and on such good terms with the Empire that during the reign of Constantine they were received as *fœderati* in Pannonia (Hungary) and settled there for about seventy years. When Stilicho summoned the legions guarding the Rhine to come to his aid in Italy against Alaric, the Vandals, as we have seen, crossed the river together with the Alans and Suevi, and were already in Spain in 409. More than once they came to conflict with the Goths, by whom they were beaten; they were therefore considered to be worth little as fighting men, in addition to their previous bad reputation of being greedier, more perfidious, and more cruel than any other barbarians. For though their manners and customs were more sober than those of other tribes, their fanatical religious zeal urged them to far greater and often ferocious intolerance. In 427 we find them all reunited under the sway of Genseric, who had become their sole chieftain at his brother's death. This leader, lamed by a fall from his horse, was an undersized man of halting speech, but daring, cruel, and quick of resolve. Like all the Vandals he belonged to the Arian sect, but was declared—whether truly or falsely is unknown—to have been converted to this creed from the Catholic faith, in which he was reared, and therefore, like most renegades, to be specially intolerant. After a successful encounter with the Suevi in 428 we find him in Africa the following year. It was a migration as well as an invasion, for he had brought over all the old people, women, and children, and his armed men did not number more than 50,000.

Certainly this force could not have sufficed for conquest had not the country been already weakened by discord, and had there not been a party favourable to the

invaders. Accordingly the Vandals advanced, ravaging the land, demolishing Catholic churches, murdering some of the bishops and priests, and enslaving many others. So rapid was their progress that by the year 430 only three of the principal cities—Cirta, Hippo, and Carthage—remained to the Romans. Bonifacius had now shaken off his lethargy, and when the Vandals advanced to lay siege to Hippo, he gave them battle, but being worsted in the encounter was forced to take refuge in the beleaguered city. The Bishop, St. Augustine, was there and died on the 28th of August, 430, in the third month of the siege, which lasted for eleven more. Then at last came reinforcements from Constantinople under the command of Aspar, whereupon the Vandals struck their camp and marched away. Bonifacius then attacked them in junction with the Byzantines, but again suffered defeat (431). In consequence of this reverse, Africa was left for some time at the mercy of the foe. Aspar returned to Constantinople, and Bonifacius went back to Ravenna, where Placidia, remembering the services he had rendered her when she was opposed by Ætius, whose presumption had now grown unbearable, received him most favourably and with unmistakable marks of preference. Thus there was bitter strife between the two generals, and at last they came to battle near Rimini. According to some authorities Bonifacius was the victor, but received a mortal wound and presently died. According to others Ætius won the victory, seized his rival's possessions, and married his widow, but succumbed before long to a malady that was either brought on or aggravated by the humiliations he had suffered at Court. Hence the legend of the duel between the two generals and the injunctions given by the dying Bonifacius to his wife to bestow her hand on his successful rival.

The state of affairs at Ravenna was by no means satis-

factory. After Bonifacius's defeat in Africa and his subsequent death in Italy, Placidia was at the mercy of Ætius, the only valiant general she possessed. Devoured by ambition, the latter grew more imperious every day. Gaul and Spain were both overrun by barbarians, who were pressing forward from all sides. The Vandals, too, were devastating Africa at their will. Nevertheless, their number was so small compared with the vastness of the country they occupied that they had little hope of being able to withstand successfully an army from Ravenna, that might be easily reinforced from Constantinople. Thus, both sides desired peace, at least for the moment, and in fact a treaty was concluded at Hippo on the 11th of February, 435. The Vandals were allowed to inhabit the regions they had already seized, including a portion of the province of Carthage; but neither the city itself nor the adjacent territory, which were still held by the Romans, to whom tribute was to be paid. But these terms were speedily violated, and in 439 Genseric profited by the war the Romans were waging in Gaul, to take possession of Carthage. Thus, being master of the best ports along the coast, he began to make maritime expeditions to neighbouring islands, and particularly to Sicily, where, from the year 440, he often executed raids. Meanwhile the Empire had to face increased perils in Gaul, and was continually obliged to despatch fresh troops there. Accordingly, in 442, a second treaty of peace was arranged, by which the Romans retained possession of Mauretania and Western Numidia, while the Vandals remained masters of Sicily, of the Pro-consular province of Carthage, Byzacena, and Eastern Numidia. Valentinian III., having attained his majority, had already assumed the reins of government at Ravenna, and since the year 437 had been married to Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius II,

By the treaty of peace of 442 the Vandals were not merely permitted to inhabit the country on the footing of *fœderati*, but had gained the unconditional right of occupying it—a privilege never before granted to any barbarian tribe. This implied a veritable dismemberment of the Empire, the beginning of an entirely new state of things. It should be noted, however, that although the Vandals were believed, and with truth, to be the most cruel of all barbarians, their rule was far less oppressive, especially for the lower classes, than has been usually thought. They chiefly settled in the province of Carthage, remaining gathered together, sharing the lands they had seized and enjoying possession of them without paying taxes. Genseric reserved vast territories for himself in the surrounding provinces. The persons who suffered most were the great landowners, who, despoiled of all their property, were reduced, if they remained in the country, to the condition of stewards, menials, and even sometimes of slaves, compelled to manage or cultivate, for the benefit of the Vandals, lands which were once their own, and were also robbed of their movable property. Their sufferings were shared by the clergy, who had also possessed vast estates, and were always cruelly treated by the Arian Vandals. The field labourers and peasants and city artisans were left more or less in their former condition. Neither was the oppression of the great landed proprietors pushed everywhere to the same excess, but mainly restricted to the province of Carthage. The occupied territory was so vast in extent, that the greater part of it was necessarily exempt not only from oppressive measures but even from the direct action of the new government, which was too rough and primitive compared with that of Rome to be able to enforce fiscal exactions with an equally heavy hand. The other provinces were practically left alone, inasmuch as the Vandals made no

change in the old Roman system of administration, and although very heavily taxed they were less ground down than they had been formerly under the implacably persistent tyranny of the Imperial collectors. Something of the same kind occurred even in Spain and Gaul where the provincial assemblies of headmen were allowed to retain the direction of local affairs. In those countries the Visigoths and Burgundians appropriated two-thirds of the land. But the burden of even this atrocious confiscation was chiefly felt by the great landholders. And although the tyranny exercised by the Vandals in Africa was undoubtedly far more oppressive, it was confined to one portion only of the occupied territory. Nevertheless it stirred the evicted proprietors and all the priesthood to the bitterest animosity against them, for the clergy, even when not dispossessed of their lands, were subjected to persecution from the religious intolerance of the conquerors. Thus the public rancour was kept seething, even among those who had suffered least wrong, and this universal ill-feeling was by no means an insignificant factor in the speedy overthrow of the Vandal power when the Byzantines came to Africa.

That the barbarian tyranny was positively milder than has been usually believed, is confirmed by the testimony of the fifth-century writer Salvianus, who, after stating "that everything in the barbarians, nay, even the very smell of them, was odious to the Romans," was able to add that "nevertheless, they" (the Romans), "and especially those who were poor, found the barbarian tyranny preferable to that of the Empire." "Among the Romans," he says, "the taxes are imposed by assemblies of rich men, who do not pay them, but exact them from the poor. And if, perchance, the taxes be diminished, it is the rich, not the poor, who benefit by the relief. Thus whenever money has to be paid the people must supply it ;

if, on the other hand, the burden of taxation is to be lightened, matters are arranged as if only the rich had borne the burden. Among the Franks, Huns, Vandals, and Goths, similar infamies are unknown.”¹ It should be added, however, that this was not the result of any superior virtue or feeling of justice on the part of the barbarians, but merely a natural consequence of their system of government, which was too rough and imperfect to be able to cover the whole of a conquered country, with a closely woven network of administration from which there was no escape.

During this period Galla Placidia died (November 27, 450) on the verge of her sixtieth year. It cannot be pretended that she was a woman of great intellect, or elevated character; but her shrewdness and strength of will, compared with the incapacity of her son, were judged by many at a higher rate than they deserved. She had maintained her rule for a quarter of a century, almost indeed to the end of her life; and having always leant on the support of the Catholic clergy during a period of fierce religious strife, her memory was naturally revered in the ecclesiastical world. As the daughter of Theodosius, the principle of hereditary right was her main prop, and ensured her the favour of the Byzantine Court. Furthermore, her dazzling beauty gave her great power over men, and enabled her to wield constant and efficacious influence on the politics of her time. Even at this day, all visitors to Ravenna—the one city of Italy and of the world that is rich in fifth century monuments—may behold the many churches erected by Placidia, the beautiful mausoleum in which she was entombed beside Honorius her brother, her husband Constantius, and her son Valentinian. None can look on those wonderful buildings, those gorgeous

¹ Salvianus, “*De Gubernatione Dei*,” bk. v. chap. v. 7, 8.

mosaics, or can hear the various legends recording the memory of the beautiful Princess, without being forced to recognise the leading part she played in the history of Ravenna. Even now her spirit seems to hover over the city.

Nevertheless, partly from the nature of the times, partly as the effect of her own personal qualities, the policy of her Court was a policy of jealousy and intrigue. In spite of the various wars carried on, with signal bravery but scant fortune, both in Africa and in Gaul, the Empire was gradually but surely declining and crumbling to pieces. During her reign, indeed, one province after another began to fall away, until at last Italy was left isolated and forsaken. The death of Placidia consigned the Empire to the feeble and incompetent grasp of her son Valentinian III. at a moment when danger was already threatening and a greater crisis at hand.

CHAPTER IX

ATTILA AND THE HUNS—THE BATTLE OF CHALONS—
GENERAL ÆTIUS—POPE LEO I.

As Ranke has told us, the problem offered at that period of European history was the following: Whether the scattered medley of different Latin and Germanic races could be amalgamated and fused together so as to form one single nation and a new form of civilisation? Whether, instead, the one race would necessarily reduce the other to subjection and entirely destroy its individuality? A great and unexpected event, however, helped considerably to draw them together against a common foe.

As we have already noted, the Huns, although of a totally different origin from that of the Latin and Germanic races, had dwelt for half a century in ancient Dacia beyond the Danube. Between them and the Empire lived the Germanic tribes, whom they had pushed towards the West. Later on, Alaric and his Visigoths had poured into Rome by the Porta Salaria; while Vandals, Suevi, and Alans had crossed the Rhine. Nevertheless, for a considerable period the Huns remained on fairly peaceful terms with the Empire, rendering it good service on more than one occasion by sending contingents to fight in its cause, side by side with the Imperial legions. This had helped to give them

some training in Roman discipline, and Attila having taken a few Greeks and Romans into his service, the administration of his public affairs was placed on an orderly footing. At any rate, it is certain that the borders of his kingdom had been widened with extraordinary speed, by the admission of fresh tribes who, although retaining their own chieftains, were dependent upon the king of the Huns, and yielded him ready and devoted obedience. Apparently this process of aggrandisement might be continued *ad infinitum*, so long as the authority of the supreme head should endure. Meanwhile, to use Thierry's expression, the valley of the Danube was so swarming with population that it looked as though some giant ant-heap had been suddenly upset there. These tribes made threatening forays on all sides, and especially on the Imperial territory, so that Theodosius II. had recourse to the favourite Byzantine expedient of paying tribute to Attila to keep him and his tribes quiet. But it had the contrary effect of provoking fresh threats of aggression, for the barbarians continually demanded increased tribute, and failing to obtain it renewed their work of pillage.

In 445 Attila became sole chief of the Huns by the death of his brother Bleda, who was possibly murdered by his command. Thanks to his savage cruelty, Attila is known to history by the name of *Flagellum Dei*. He was an undersized man, with a big head, a flat nose, small eyes, and the yellowish skin of a Tartar; he had a fierce, roving glance, and a certain dignity of bearing that gave him the air of a born leader of men. But he cannot be said to have shown any military genius, seeing that, apart from his numerous raids, massacres, and pillaging expeditions, the only pitched battle he ever delivered resulted in defeat. At some moments he gave evidence of a certain generosity and almost greatness of soul, so far as

could be possible in a barbarian of his stamp. But he undoubtedly possessed a special faculty for organisation and command, seeing how many fresh tribes he brought under his sway, including the Gepidæ, the Alans, the Ostrogoths, and Suevi. Thus was formed one of the vastest kingdoms history has known. According to contemporary writers, in fact, Attila's dominions stretched from Scandinavia to Persia, menaced Persepolis, and was bordered by China on one side and the Roman Empire on the other. Practically, however, this huge kingdom consisted mainly of an agglomeration of independent tribes who had entered into a confederation with him and were prompt to yield him obedience, since it suited him to encourage their lust for war and rapine. In Hungary and Transylvania, however, his sway was absolute and uncontrolled. But having to placate and keep occupied all these restless and ferocious tribes, for no less than nineteen years (434-453) Attila hung like a sword of Damocles over the Eastern and Western Empires, and accordingly both finally united against the common foe.

There was a perpetual interchange of embassies between Attila's Court and those of Constantinople and Ravenna. Fruitless attempts were made to check the growing pretensions of the barbarian chief who directed the movements of such numberless hordes. Even in the year 433 Theodosius had despatched two orators to the Court of the Huns, where both brothers then reigned. The two envoys waited upon Attila, who received them on horseback, so they also remained mounted. The only result of this embassy was that it proved necessary to double the usual tribute, and the amount was paid by the Eastern Empire. But even this was not enough, for a short time afterwards Attila imperiously demanded the church plate of a city he had captured, although it had been already pawned for a large sum. The strangest pretext

for making war, however, was of a different kind. Honoria, sister to Valentinian III., had been detected, at the age of sixteen, in a love intrigue with an under officer of the Ravenna Court, and in punishment was sent off to Constantinople by her mother. The palace there seemed changed into a convent, for Theodosius II. devoted his life to collecting saintly relics and illuminating religious manuscripts. He was still subject to the influence of his sister Pulcheria, who had induced him in 421 to marry Athenais, the daughter of a Greek philosopher, renamed Eudocia on receiving Christian baptism. All members of the Court had to spend their days in prayer and psalm-singing, in visiting the poor and forming processions; so that when the young Honoria arrived she felt as if in prison. Moved by despair, it is said, she then adopted the strange device of sending her signet-ring to Attila, asking him to come to release her and to take her as one of his numerous wives. At first, so ran the tale, Attila regarded the strange offer with the contempt it deserved. Later on, however, when it suited him to quarrel with the Empire, he used the affair as a pretext for demanding not only Honoria's hand, but likewise the inheritance to which he declared her entitled. In the year 447 he had advanced close to the walls of Constantinople and compelled Theodosius to triple the subsidy that Attila styled a tribute. And every year he sent fresh embassies, with added demands and more preposterous claims.

One of these embassies has become specially famous owing to the fact that one of its members has bequeathed us a very minute and authentic account of all that took place. In 448 two envoys appeared at Constantinople—Edecon, believed by some to have been the father of Odovacar, the first barbarian king of Italy, and Orestes, father of Romulus Augustus, the last Emperor of the West. They were the bearers of various demands, and

among others insisted on the surrender of certain fugitive Huns. While this matter was being discussed, one of the Court eunuchs bribed the ambassadors' interpreter Vigilas to make proposals to them for the murder of Attila. Edecon pretended to accept the idea, but only in order to reveal the plot to his lord. Meanwhile, for the better concealment of the sinister design, it was arranged that Attila's envoys should be accompanied back to their own land by Maximinus and Priscus the Sophist, to whom we owe the description of the journey. These two officials, however, were left in total ignorance of the plot that had been woven. So, being deceived themselves, it would be easier for them to deceive Attila. In their train were the seventeen fugitive Huns they were pledged to give up. With these men, and in the company of Edecon, Orestes, and Vigilas, they traversed regions wasted by the ravages of the Huns, where they found human bones and skulls scattered on the ground, and ruined cities only inhabited by a few old men and deserted sick folk. After crossing the Danube they reached Attila's camp just as that chief was returning from a raid. He accepted the gifts they brought; but being roused to fury on finding that only seventeen fugitives had been surrendered to him, sent the interpreter back to demand the others, and invited the envoys from Constantinople to accompany him farther into the country to his own palace, where he would give them his reply.

Accordingly, Maximinus and Priscus pushed on into Hungary, crossing rivers on rough canoes and by raft, and finally reached the capital of the Huns. Here they beheld Attila make his entry in state, preceded by young maidens chanting national songs; and all passed under canopies of cloth held aloft by other girls. The King checked his horse before the dwelling of his chief

minister, whose wife came to the door to offer food and wine to the sovereign, while other persons held a silver table for his use. Attila's palace was merely a capacious log-hut, but had some pretensions to elegance. The dwellings of his various wives stood scattered around it. The only stone building existing there was a bath-house erected by a Roman. One of the most notable incidents of this very strange journey was a conversation that Priscus had with a Greek in the service of the Huns whose dress and manners he had adopted. This man lauded the barbarian life, saying, "In time of peace, one enjoys perfect freedom here. But you Romans are badly off in war and worse off in peace. You call in foreign soldiery to defend the Empire, because your tyrants do not even permit you to bear arms, and you are oppressed by revenue officers, spies, and enormous inequality of fortune, the rich being exempt from fines and taxes, and all the burdens falling on the poor. You have to pay for everything, even for defending your own rights." To which Priscus replied, "That comes from the division of labour and from granting every one due payment for his work. We cannot kill our slaves as you do, but we try to correct them in a paternal way. Your pretended freedom only consists in all being allowed to join in war without any military discipline. We have laws for the preservation of every just right. Even the will of the dead is sacred with us, for all may bequeath their possessions to any one they choose." "Ah, yes!" exclaimed the Greek, bursting into tears, "the Roman laws are good, Roman legislation is excellent; but who executes or respects the laws? Your rulers are no longer worthy of their forefathers, they drive the State to ruin."

After having seen Attila administer summary justice at the door of his palace, the two envoys fell in with the ambassadors from the Western Empire, who told them that

the Hun considered himself master of the world, wished to impose his will on the whole Empire, and thought himself invincible because he imagined that he owned the sword of Mars. A herdsman had found this weapon sticking upright in the earth among the grass, when following the bloody trail of one of his beasts whose hoof had been cut in stumbling over it. At the end of the day the envoys attended a State banquet in the royal palace. Attila sat on a species of couch, behind which a flight of steps led up to his curtained bed-place. His eldest son sat beside him but never spoke, and to the right and left of the couple were Onegesh, the Prime Minister, and a noble Hun. "So even those places were not assigned to us," observed Priscus. Two of the King's sons faced the minister, while the guests were seated round the hall against the wooden wainscot, and after wine had been handed round, food was brought to them on small tables, one for every group of three or four, decked with silver dishes and golden cups. Attila, however, affected great simplicity, ate nothing but meat served on wooden trenchers, and even his drinking goblets were of wood. Contrary to the barbarian fashion the hilt of his sword, which was suspended behind him, his bridle and boot-straps were quite plain and unjewelled. Later on, songs in praise of his prowess were sung amid a storm of enthusiasm. Then buffoons were introduced, one of whom—a Moorish dwarf with a hump and twisted feet—excited the laughter of every one, save Attila, who seemed rather disgusted with him. Although he showed great irritation with regard to the plot that had been designed against him, nevertheless the envoys were able to convince him of their innocence and good faith; for after lengthy negotiations and promises to pay him more money, they finally succeeded in patching up a temporary peace.

In the year 450, however, this state of things came to an end. Theodosius had died of injuries caused by a fall from his horse, and left no male heirs. His wife Eudoxia had been exiled for some years on a charge of infidelity. So his sister Pulcheria succeeded to the throne, in partnership with Marcian, a valiant and elderly soldier, to whom, in the interest of the State, she accorded the title of husband but on condition that he asserted no conjugal rights. His first act of government was to pronounce sentence of death on the eunuch Chrysaphius, who had planned the secret plot against Attila's life. This caused a belief that the new Emperor wished to curry favour with the king of the Huns. But it was speedily seen that he had not the meek temper of Theodosius II., for when Attila next demanded tribute, with the usual threats in case of refusal, Marcian promptly replied, "Gifts to friends, steel to foes." ¹ Thus war was now held to be inevitable.

Attila was then at the zenith of his power, and in command of a formidable host, numbering, according to certain authorities, 500,000 men, and 700,000 according to others. All was prepared for the campaign; but whether against the East or the West, was not yet decided. The Eastern Empire lay nearer at hand, but could only be approached across regions which had been repeatedly ravaged, and then the attack must be delivered under the walls of Constantinople, a stronghold capable of offering formidable resistance, especially under Marcian, who was determined to defend it. Besides, a barbarian army such as Attila's, composed of many different races, if not victorious at the first onslaught, might be easily dispersed. The Western Empire on the contrary, though farther away, seemed likely to afford an easy conquest for the Huns.

¹ "Quiescenti munera largiturum, bellum minanti viros et arma obiecturum" (Prisci, "Fragmenta," xv.).

Ætius was the sole general that Empire possessed, and although a valiant soldier, had always been on good terms with Attila, and often received help from him. Nearly the whole of Gaul was occupied by barbarian tribes at strife with one another. A section of the Franks was already urging the Huns to cross the Rhine. The powerful kingdom of the Visigoths was allied with the Vandals, who promised to second Attila's expedition by invading the shores of Southern Gaul. Pretexts for war never failed him. Accordingly he chose this moment to demand the hand of Honoria, who had sent him her ring, and likewise that portion of the Empire which, in his opinion, should constitute her marriage portion. On receiving the reply that the Princess was already married to another, he said they had disposed of her on purpose to avoid giving her to him, and immediately ordered his army to advance.

Nevertheless, the state of affairs in the West was really very different from what it appeared to be and from what Attila believed. First of all, Theodoric, the king of the Visigoths, a man of remarkable valour, was not adverse to the Romans, but distinctly well disposed towards them. It is true that he had given his daughter in marriage to Genseric's son and was thus united by the bond of blood with the Vandals who were Rome's bitterest foes. But Genseric believing, or feigning to believe, that Theodoric's daughter intended to give him poison, had cut off her ears and nose and sent her back to her father. Thus the former alliance was changed to a mortal enmity, calling, according to the barbarian usage, for desperate and sanguinary revenge.

Ætius had been friendly with the Huns, but he was now in a position similar to that of Stilicho; furthermore, whereas the latter had been a Roman barbarian, he was a Roman who had dwelt long with barbarians.

Hence it could not be supposed, if the Empire were at war with the Huns, that Ætius could hesitate or fail to feel the Roman blood that flowed in his veins. Then there was another argument as well. The Huns were as different from the Germans in race and manners as they were different from the Romans; they were polygamous, Pagan nomads, and their victory would have been the triumph of Oriental barbarism, of Turanians and Tartars over Aryan tribes. It would have been exactly as though the Persians had conquered at Salamis, or—let us say—the Turks at Lepanto. In either case the course of the world's history would have been sensibly changed. Hence the vast historical importance of the coming struggle. Everything now depended on whether the Visigoths were aware of this, and would decide, for the good of civilisation and for their common racial interest, to join with the Romans. In fact, through the mediation of Avitus, an Imperial citizen of great influence, Ætius induced the Visigoths to form a pact of alliance. The decisive clash of arms was rapidly drawing near.

Crossing the Rhine in 451, Attila marched forward, ravaging the land and slaughtering the inhabitants who seemed incapable of any resistance, excepting in a few cities, where the religious spirit was roused to furious reprisals against Pagan barbarities. In fact, after the destruction of Metz and Rheims, St. Geneviève managed to restore the confidence of the inhabitants of Paris (then scantily peopled), and the town escaped destruction by a miracle, it was thought. Orleans, the city that was to be renowned in a later age for its successful defence under Joan of Arc, opposed a stubborn resistance to Attila, thanks to the energy of the Bishop, Anianus, who, on finding that the city was completely invested, hurried off to inform Ætius that it would be impossible to hold out

against so enormous a force beyond the 24th of June. Indeed the walls were almost battered down before the united armies of Theodoric and Ætius came to its relief and compelled Attila to raise the siege and prepare for the great battle that was shortly afterwards fought between Troyes and Châlons sur Marne. The latter city, being unwall'd, might have been easily sacked, but was also saved by the efforts of its Bishop (Lupus), who in some strange and almost wonderful way induced Attila to spare the town. Before the great battle was engaged, the barbarian king followed the usual practice of examining sheep's entrails in search of an omen, and the answer given by the augurs was that the Huns would suffer defeat, but that the enemy's leader would be killed.

This reply filled Attila with anxious doubts ; nevertheless, the two armies at last came to battle (451). The Imperialists arranged their force, with the Alans in the centre, being suspicious of the latter's good faith. The Romans under Ætius formed the right wing, Theodoric and his Visigoths the left. But in Attila's army the King and his Huns formed the centre, the right and left wings being composed of federated subject tribes ; so that the Ostrogoths and Gepidæ confronted the Visigoths. This famous battle was not only of great historic importance, but likewise one of the most terrible ever recorded. Jordanes styles it : "*Bellum atrox, multiplex, immune, pertinax, cui simile nullum narrat antiquitas.*" He also adds that so much blood was shed as to change a neighbouring streamlet into a red and roaring torrent—" *liquore concitatus insolito, torrens factus est cruoris augmento.*" And the wounded could only slake their thirst in this stream ! The Visigoths fought very valiantly, but Theodoric perished on the field. The Huns performed prodigies of daring, and Attila attacked with the fury of a wounded lion. And presently, beginning to despair of success, he

caused saddles to be heaped up as a funeral pyre, intending to seek death in the flames should he be doomed to defeat. Jordanes declared that 162,000 combatants perished that day, without including the 15,000 slain in a previous encounter. Idatius puts the number of killed at 300,000. This serves to prove how great a part imagination played in all such accounts, both at that period and for long after. A legend of later date that has inspired many poets and painters likewise adds that the following night men beheld the souls of the fallen drawn up in battle array in the sky and fiercely renewing the fight. What is certain is that, although the result of the battle was not quite decisive, Attila beat a retreat. Thus, Theodoric having fallen, the prophecy of the augurs seemed actually fulfilled. Undeniably the good fortune of the day was chiefly owing to Ætius, who, besides proving himself an excellent soldier and a master of strategy, had secured for the Empire the alliance of the Visigoths. But his career seemed doomed to resemble that of Stilicho in every particular. In fact, treasonable motives were assigned to him for having neglected to pursue the retreating Huns; it was averred that he did not desire the total destruction of the foe, lest the power of the Visigoths should be thereby too much increased, since, in his opinion, the latter had already played too great a part in the victory. On the contrary, the truth was that the Visigoths, having chosen a successor to Theodoric on the field of battle in the person of Thorismund, their new sovereign, were obliged to hasten to his capital (Toulouse) in order to strengthen his position, which was already contested there. Thus it would have been difficult to attempt another engagement with the Huns. At first, on finding there was no pursuit, Attila dreaded falling into an ambush; but then, taking courage, hastened to cross the Rhine and withdraw to Hungary,

in order to reorganise his army and prepare for fresh campaigns.

Apparently he was then planning an expedition to Rome, for he made a rapid advance towards Italy, and in 452 was already encamped before the walls of Aquileia, which resisted so stubbornly that he was utterly discouraged and on the point of raising the siege. But legend tells us that precisely at that moment he noticed a flight of storks darting away from the city with their young, and this convinced him that no food remained for any one within the walls. He therefore delayed giving the signal for retreat, and shortly afterwards the city surrendered to him and was almost razed to the ground. Altinum, Concordia, and Padua shared the same fate, while other towns only escaped total destruction by opening their gates and meekly submitting to pillage.

These are the events which caused Italians to give Attila the name of *Flagellum Dei*, and drove fugitives from Aquileia and the neighbouring towns to seek refuge in the Venetian lagoons, and found the wonderful town that, in virtue of its history, position, and magical charm, is the one peerless city of the world. Many rivers, such as the Adige, Brenta, Piave, Tagliamento, and Po, flow into the Adriatic at short distances from one another; and as almost all of these, the Po excepted, rapidly descend from the neighbouring mountains, they bring down masses of pebbles and boulders, which, according to their size and weight, are deposited in the sandy bed of the sea at more or less distance from its shores. Thus the Lagoon was first formed, and afterwards the ridge of the Lido, which acts as an outer defence and breakwater to the shallows behind it, where practised pilots are needed to navigate the few channels. Accordingly the Lagoon is practically a great natural fortress safely guarding the

islands scattered over it. It was on those patches of soil that Italian exiles, flying for their lives from the Huns, drove the first piles of the city that was destined, as Hodgkin observes, to become Europe's best shield against the Turks.

There now seemed no possible obstacle to prevent Attila's advance upon Rome. Only, his multitudinous host, that devastated everything on its path and spread desolation on all sides, was beginning to suffer starvation and to be decimated by disease. Ætius was still inactive, it is true, and many blamed his supineness; but his legions might appear at any moment. The Emperor Marcian not only promised to send reinforcements from Constantinople, but seemed disposed to undertake a direct attack on the territories of the Huns. All this naturally caused Attila much uncertainty of mind. Ferocious, barbarian and Pagan as he was, he was likewise prone to superstition. The very name of the Empire impressed him, even as it impressed many other barbarians, with a sense of deep terror, and the death of Alaric was always in his mind. That Christian religion in which he had no faith, but which, nevertheless, from its very nature and the enormous number of its followers, was seen to have so extraordinary an influence over all, compelled even from him a strange, irresistible, instinctive sentiment of reverence. When addressed by men authorised to speak in the name of that religion, he was thrown into confusion and seemed unable to reply. Exactly when his mind was in this state a solemn embassy was announced to him, sent from Rome, and comprising the ex-Consul Avienus and the ex-Prefect Trigetius. But the ambassador-in-chief was no other than the venerated head of the Christian faith—Peter's successor, the representative of God upon earth, Leo I., Bishop of Rome, and perhaps the greatest man of that century. Of Roman birth, his

exalted Christian spirit was interfused with the spirit of ancient Rome. Thanks to the combination of these elements, he was the first to originate and expound a clear conception of the universal Church of Christ as we may still find it set forth in his discourses. "St. Peter and St. Paul," so he said, "are the Romulus and Remus of the New Rome, which is no less superior to the Old than truth is to error. If Ancient Rome was the head of the Pagan world, St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, came to teach in New Rome, so that the light of Christianity might be thence diffused throughout the earth." This conception is continually repeated in his discourses, which are simple, clear, precise, and full of common sense. They are quite free from the impassioned, theological subtlety of the Greeks—have, indeed, no concern with theology. They say little of the Virgin and Saints, but much of Jesus Christ; they enjoin charity and condemn usury. Whenever theological questions had to be faced, he refused to discuss them, but with sure intuition invariably divined which of the contending doctrines was destined to triumph for the good of the Church and the faith, and unhesitatingly proclaimed it. Leo was not only of great intellect, but, above all, of lofty character. His marvellous energy and immutable strength of will were proved by the way in which, amid all the disorder and tumultuous agitation of the period, he maintained the unity and authority of the Church of Rome as founded by St. Peter, who alone had received from God the power to bind and to loose, and alone transmitted that power to his successors. He was determined to rally all Christendom round the Church. "The royal and the ecclesiastical power must," he declared, "act in concert. The first appertains to the Empire for the ruling of nations and the defence of the Church, to whom is entrusted the care of souls. Rejoice, O Rome! celebrate

the birth of St. Peter and St. Paul, by whom thou hast been converted from a teacher of error into a disciple of truth, and placed at the head of the world, to attain to higher dignity by the aid of religion." These ideas not only permeate his discourses and his writings, but likewise inspired his whole life, and, by giving shape and substance to his character, raised him above the level of all his contemporaries.

The great aim of Leo's life was to bring not only the bishops of the West, but likewise those of the Eastern Church, into subjection to the authority of the Pope, as Head of the Roman Church. It is quite true that from the moment when the Council of Sardica (344) submitted the Eastern question regarding the deposition of Athanasius to the decision of Rome, the Popes had always endeavoured, on the strength of that instance, to establish a general principle in favour of the supreme authority of the Roman Church. But Leo I. dedicated his life to the task of obtaining the recognition of this principle and carrying it into effect. He succeeded in this to a certain extent, for he installed a Macedonian Bishop in his See in the name of St. Peter, which implied the extension of his ecclesiastical authority over the whole Prefecture of Illyricum, including the portion of it that belonged to the Eastern Empire. He thus prepared for the future by treading the road that was to be invariably followed by his successors until the desired aim was reached of making Rome the capital of the Universal Church. It is extremely curious to note how the essential germ of the whole subsequent history of the Papacy already lay hidden in the lofty mind and strong purpose of this great prelate, and how it slowly developed in after ages.

This was the man who, inspired by the invulnerable faith that knows no fear, appeared before Attila, at the head of the Embassy from Rome, and as the true representative

of the Eternal City, the living personification of the Universal Church and the only true faith, with the fixed persuasion that all, whether willingly or unwillingly, must yield obedience to the Church. The meeting took place near Peschiera, in the summer of 452. No one knows what the Pope said to Attila. At any rate after that colloquy, to the general amazement, the Hun beat a retreat. Whether he was impelled to this decision by the Papal words of authority, or by the general state of affairs, and the difficulties in which his army was then involved, it is quite impossible to say.

A legend was built up on this incident, in which the whole merit of it was accorded to Leo I. In allusion to him and to the Bishop Lupus who had prevented the sacking of Troyes, Attila is alleged to have exclaimed, "I can conquer men, but a lion and a wolf have succeeded in vanquishing the conqueror." Another legend has been immortalised by Raphael's brush, who in the halls of the Vatican has depicted Attila as terror-stricken, and the spectacle of the Pope quickly riding towards him and warning him to retreat, with St. Peter and St. Paul hovering in the air above Leo, brandishing flaming swords. But a fresh event occurred to increase the mysterious significance of Attila's strange withdrawal. Within a short time the barbarian king took to himself a new wife, celebrated his nuptials by a grand banquet, and a few hours later died of hæmorrhage. On the same night the Emperor Marcian announced that in his dreams he had beheld Attila's bow snapped in twain. The Huns laid the body of their hero under a tent in the great Hungarian plain, and slashed their faces with their swords that blood instead of tears might be shed for him. Meanwhile a squadron of horsemen circled rapidly round the tent, singing national songs in praise of the dead, and deploring that instead of falling in battle, he should have perished

in the midst of joy and delight, so that his death could not be avenged.¹ Attila was always regarded by Italians as "The Scourge of God," and all their legends depict him in that light. On the other hand, all the Hungarian, Scandinavian, and even Teuton legends are eulogies on his mighty deeds. After his sudden death his enormous kingdom broke up and melted away as quickly as it had been formed.

If the embassy headed by Pope Leo was the first visible proof of the enormous moral force the Papacy was beginning to wield, the pitched encounter with the Huns, called the battle of Chalôns (though fought many miles from that city), was justly considered as the last heroic deed of the Roman Empire. The merit of the victory being attributed to Ætius, this general was honoured as the saviour of the Empire, although he afterwards made no move to check the Huns' advance into Italy. He was certainly a great captain, of rare strategical skill and of extraordinary physical strength. Thus he was never tired of work, on which, indeed, his energy seemed to thrive, as one reads in his panegyric. But, the great luck that attended him and the eminent services he had rendered to the Empire swelled his ambition to so high a pitch, that he tried to play the tyrant in all things and became more and more obnoxious to Valentinian III., who, having no sons of his own, had promised him his daughter's hand. Now, however, that the Huns no longer inspired fear, the Emperor grew haughty, intolerant, and always deferred the fulfilment of his promise. Thereupon Ætius pressed his claim with such excessive arrogance, that Valentinian determined to get rid

¹ Jordanes gives a summary of the funeral songs in these terms: "Non vulnere hostium non fraude snorum, sed gente incolumi, inter gaudia lætus, sine sensu doloris occubuit. Quis ergo hunc dicat exitum, quem nullus æstimat vindicandum?"

of him in the same way that Honorius had rid himself of Stilicho. Towards the close of 454 he invited the general to his palace in Rome, and when the latter again demanded his promised bride, Valentinian attacked and wounded him with his own hands, and summoning the cut-throats placed in hiding, had him promptly dispatched. Procopius relates that the Emperor having asked a Roman whether he had done well or ill in ridding himself of Ætius, received the following answer: "Whether it be well or ill I know not; but it is certain that with your left hand you have lopped off your right;" and the saying came true.

The following year Valentinian was murdered while witnessing athletic games in the Campus Martius, by two soldiers who had sworn to avenge their general, and also killed Heraclius the Eunuch, who had planned the treacherous attack upon Ætius, and acted as Olympius had acted towards Stilicho. By the death of Valentinian the Theodosian dynasty became extinct, after ruling the East for seventy-four years (379-453), and the West for sixty-one (394-455). Thus the Empire now entered on a new epoch, which was, practically, the beginning of the end. There were already signs of the decay into which it was rapidly falling, and the plainest sign of all was the extraordinary political power assumed by women on the one hand and military leaders on the other. In fact, after the death of Arcadius, Pulcheria had been ruler of the Empire, had changed the Court into a convent, and then taken as her partner the brave soldier Marcian. The Western Empire had been long ruled by Placidia; it was under her sway that Bonifacius and Ætius had attained so much power, and the second of these—his rival departed—became omnipotent until treacherously put to death. On the extinction of the Theodosian line many more generals of the type of soldiers of fortune started

up in the Western Empire and hastened the rapidity of its fall. Now that the throne lay vacant, the Vandals pressed forward in menacing array ; they made continual forays in Sicily, Corsica, Calabria, and even farther on, without any one having the strength to resist their incursions.

CHAPTER X

THE EMPEROR MAXIMUS—SACK OF ROME BY THE
VANDALS—RICIMER, ORESTES, AND AUGUSTULUS

IN March, 455, the Roman Senator, Petronius Maximus, ex-Consul and Prefect was elected Emperor. He was about sixty years of age, and being considered an opponent of the Theodosian dynasty was unwelcome to the majority. The ill-feeling against him was heightened by the fact of his immediately according protection to both the murderers of Valentinian III., thus rousing a suspicion that he had been privy to the crime that had raised him to the throne. In addition to this, he tried to compel Valentinian's widow, Eudoxia, to marry him by force. This Princess was only thirty-four years of age ; she was the daughter of Theodosius II., and most unwilling to give her hand to an old man accused of having had a share in her husband's murder. As usual a legend was built up on these facts to the effect that in revenge she was responsible for the coming of the Vandals, who now invaded Italy, took Rome by assault, and put it to the sack. But this account, of which Procopius is the author, is ignored by contemporary writers, or barely mentioned by one or two of them as an idle rumour. The interval between the supposed summons and the actual entry of the Vandals is too short to give any weight to this legend. As contrary evidence, there is the fact that the invaders,

instead of sparing Eudoxia, led her captive to Africa together with her two daughters. In any case no artificial reasons are needed to explain why the Vandals, after their numerous raids on the southern shores of Italy, should have been tempted to advance on Rome, which was then in a state of anarchy, utterly defenceless, and incapable of the slightest resistance. The Vandals, having increased their forces by joining with the Moorish tribes of Africa, had started piratical expeditions which made them the terror of the whole Mediterranean coast, while their savage atrocities were magnified by tradition. One of the rumours spread was that whenever they failed to capture a city at first assault, they slaughtered all the inhabitants of its territory and piled up their corpses against the walls, in order to cause an outbreak of plague, and thus drive the citizens to surrender. As if the besiegers would not have been the first to suffer in that event! It is certain, however, that they destroyed all the churches, slaughtered and took prisoners all prelates and bishops, and frequently reduced them to slavery. Hence the origin of the well-known term, *Vandalism*.

It may be therefore easily imagined that when the Vandals were known to have reached the mouth of the Tiber, all Rome was seized with panic, for the Emperor Maximus had made no attempt whatever to fortify the walls. The only thing that occurred to him was to proclaim that every one was permitted to leave the city, and he too made ready for flight. But his cowardice stirred the Roman people to such a pitch of indignation, that a violent rebellion broke out. The Emperor was killed, his body torn to pieces, and after being paraded through the streets with ferocious yells of imprecation, the bleeding remains were cast into the Tiber. Meanwhile Rome had no Emperor, no government, and no means of defence against the swiftly advancing barbarian horde. All was

disorder and anarchy. There were adherents of the Theodosian dynasty cursing the election of Maximus ; Pagans appealing to their ancient gods ; Christians horrified by such a spectacle, prophesying the coming vengeance of the Lord ; barbarian men-at-arms who, being of the Arian creed, instead of preparing for defence, waited to see what their fellow Arians the Vandals would do.

In all this dreadful disorder only one voice was raised in accents of lofty faith and resolve, and again it was the voice of Pope Leo. I. In a very celebrated discourse of his, given on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, he exclaimed, "It is humiliating to confess, but cannot be denied, that more appeals are now addressed to demons and idols than to the Apostles, and greater interest is shown in novel spectacles than in the Blessed Martyrs. But which will better protect and save this City, games at the Circus or faith in the Saints ? Return unto the Lord, and hearken unto the marvels He hath wrought for us, and acknowledge that our liberty is due not to the influence of the planets, as the impious pretend, but to the mercy of the Almighty Lord who hath deigned to soften the hearts of raging barbarians." This discourse, held by some (Papencordt, &c.) to have special reference to the coming of the Vandals, and by others (Baronius and Milman) to the Hunnish invasion, undoubtedly shows what was the state of feeling in Rome in the middle of the fifth century and what was the attitude of the Pope. On this occasion, likewise, Leo I. was the only man who ventured to leave the city and face the barbarians ; but his interview with Genseric could not achieve the same result as his former conference with Attila. The Vandals, in junction with the still more savage Moors, were already close to the Eternal City and thirsting for plunder and bloodshed. Nevertheless,

it was promised to the Pope that no Christian churches should be burnt and that the lives of non-combatants should be spared.

A few days after the murder of Maximus the Vandals entered Rome (June, 455), aided, it would seem, by the treasonable act of an Arian barbarian, who showed them the easiest way to get in. The sacking of the city went on for fourteen days; all the valuable contents of the Imperial palace and of the Pagan temples were put on board galleys and carried away—gold, silver, precious stones, together with numerous Greek and Roman statues. Campania was pillaged in the same fashion. Even the venerated sacred vessels from the Temple at Jerusalem, which had been brought to Rome in triumph and are still recorded in the sculptures on the Arch of Titus, were likewise carried off oversea. Although the truth of this robbery has been doubted, we find it confirmed by Procopius, who subsequently related that Belisarius captured this sacred spoil from the Vandals in Africa and transported it to Constantinople. Nevertheless, it is certain that some of the accounts of the wholesale devastation of Rome by the Vandals must have been exaggerated, seeing that after the barbarians' departure the city still possessed many fine churches and monuments. But it is equally certain that since the days of Brennus no such destruction and havoc had ever been inflicted on Rome. In addition to all the treasures, jewels, and works of art, the Vandals carried off crowds of prisoners, most of whom were made slaves. Among the captives, together with many priests and monks, the Empress Eudoxia and her daughters Eudocia and Placida were also carried off. Genseric afterwards married the elder princess to his son Huneric, thus blending Vandalic with Imperial blood; the younger one, on the contrary, was kept with her mother in honourable confinement for the space of seven

years, and then at last given up to the Emperor Leo at Constantinople, who had long demanded their release. All the rest of the captives were allotted as slaves to their conquerors, children separated from their parents, husbands from their wives. The only alleviation to their cruel sufferings came from the truly heroic charity of Bishop Deogratias of Carthage. He converted his churches there into hospitals for sick prisoners, sold the sacred vessels of gold and silver ornaments in order to ransom slaves and reunite scattered families. His own special church became the general infirmary, and notwithstanding his advanced age, he tended the sick night and day until he died of overwork and exhaustion. Then his devoted congregation gave him pious burial in a secret place to preserve his remains from barbarian insult. Thus in the terrible overthrow of the Roman world the only examples of human heroism and dignity were those given by the representatives of the Church and religion. Although the fall of ancient Rome certainly dates from its sack by the Vandals, the new Rome then began to arise and furnish proofs of a different but no less admirable greatness. The splendour of the Capitol had faded away, that of the Vatican had dawned.

So great was the consternation in which Italy was plunged when the Vandal invaders had departed, that for some months no steps were taken to elect another Emperor. The first person to think of it was Theodoric II., the king of the Visigoths, who, with the support of the Roman legions and Gallo-Roman nobles gathered at Arles, promoted the election of Avitus, who assumed the purple in July, 455. This Emperor was a nobleman of Auvergne, who had fought bravely under Ætius, and assisted the latter to conclude the alliance with the Visigoths against Attila. But as his election proved the predominance of provincial and barbarian

votes, it was viewed with small favour by Rome and the Senate, although approved by Constantinople.

The greatest danger for the whole of the West now proceeded from the Vandals; accordingly Avitus despatched an army led by their bitter enemy, the valiant Ricimer, son of a Suevic father and a Goth mother, who immediately began operations against the foe. In 456 he achieved a signal victory either in Sardinian or Corsican waters, according to various authorities, although in reality the fight seems to have been carried on off both islands. This triumph rendered Ricimer more powerful than the Emperor himself. Then all at once he found himself placed in a similar position to that of Stilicho and Ætius. But, taking warning from the lessons of the past, he resolved to avoid his predecessors' fate, and instead of allowing emperors to get rid of him, proposed to rid himself of them whenever they gave signs of becoming dangerous. Therefore one after another he sent four emperors out of the world, replacing them by creatures of his own eventually destined to the same fate. Thus was accomplished the total destruction of the Western Empire, which, thanks to the method employed by Ricimer, passed completely into barbarian hands. This success was achieved not only by the fact of a barbarian general making and unmaking emperors at his pleasure, but also because he allowed many months to elapse between the decease of one sovereign and the election of another, so that the Western throne often remained vacant for a considerable time. These long interregnums helped to persuade the world that real emperors might be easily dispensed with and replaced by barbarian rulers, as subsequently occurred when Odovacar formally assumed the crown in his own name.

Avitus was the first to suffer the hard fate reserved by Ricimer for candidates of his own choice; for when

this Emperor realised that Rome was against him and the barbarian general the real master there, he felt that all foothold failed him, and proposed going to Gaul, where his election had been carried, for the purpose of collecting an army there to escort him back to Italy and strengthen his position on the throne. This scheme, however, only intensified the antipathy of the Romans, who naturally disliked the idea of their Emperor marking his distrust of the capital by seeking aid from the provinces. Accordingly, in October, 456, Ricimer was enabled to seize his person at Piacenza, and afterwards compelled him to assume the tonsure and become a bishop. Thus the Imperial power remained in his own grasp until it might suit him to nominate a successor to the throne.

Almost at the same time a similar state of affairs was reproduced at Constantinople, but with opposite results. Even in the East the last vestige of the Theodosian line was extinguished when Marcian passed away. There, too, all real power was in the hands of a barbarian, *i.e.*, of the Arian general Aspar, commander of the Gothic soldiery. Nevertheless he forwarded the election of Emperor Leo I., a brave Dacian warrior of the orthodox faith, who was acclaimed by the army on the 7th of February, 457. On assuming the purple he was anointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople—a hitherto unpractised rite. Possibly it may have been performed to compensate for the lack of any hereditary title to the throne. As the proclamation by the army seemed insufficient of itself, the Church was endued with an authority she had never before enjoyed, but which she turned to marvellous account in after times. Meanwhile the new Emperor reaped advantage from it, and soon proved himself better fitted to sweep others from his path than to be swept aside himself.

Therefore, seeing that Italy had been left without an

Emperor from 456 to the early months of 457, he suggested the election of Julius Valerius Majorianus. He too had served bravely under Ætius, and was the friend of Ricimer, and after having won distinction in the latter's campaign against the Vandals, had assisted him to depose Avitus, and had been rewarded by the post of *Magister Militum*, or Master of the Soldiery. Leo's suggestion of electing him Emperor of the West was favourably received, not so much by Ricimer, who indeed only seconded Leo's views from motives of prudence, as by the Roman people and Senate, who, after a foreign Emperor such as Avitus, were rejoiced to accept one they regarded as a fellow-countryman. Accordingly Majorianus assumed the Imperial purple near Ravenna on the 1st of April, and immediately addressed an epistle to the Senate, declaring in terms instinct with the spirit of ancient Rome, that justice, virtue, and loyalty should triumph under his rule. This promise he did his utmost to fulfil. He tried to relieve the provinces from over-taxation, and above all from the arbitrary fiscal exactions which rendered the burden so insupportable; and all his laws were dictated by the same nobility of feeling. He was aware that he had been raised to the throne for military rather than political ends; hence, with the support of the Senate and people of Rome, he began to rule the provinces with a firm hand, especially where he had to deal with the Visigoths, whom he attacked very vigorously during a campaign he made in Gaul.

But the Vandals were still the dominant danger. Majorianus spent three whole years in preparing to make war on them in the joint interest of the East and the West, carefully gathering a mighty army, further increased by reinforcements from Constantinople. With the intention of marching through Spain and crossing thence to Africa, he collected a fleet of three hundred

vessels. But unexpected difficulties arose. Ricimer seemed disposed to look on idly, without giving any help, while the Spanish Visigoths showed decided hostility. Genseric, who was still a threatening power, ravaged the African coast to prevent his enemy from obtaining supplies, and even poisoned the wells. What was far worse, he contrived, by means of treason and stratagem, to capture part of the Emperor's fleet and destroy the rest of it. Had Majorianus succeeded in this campaign against the Vandals, it is certain that he would have gained enormous power, and could have entirely overthrown Ricimer's authority. But, instead, the contrary result occurred; he was defeated, and had to beat an ignominious retreat. While retiring through Gaul, he was gradually deserted by all his allies. After crossing the Alps with only his own troop of guards, on the 2nd of August, 461, he was attacked, defeated, and killed at Tortona, by Ricimer's soldiery, and thus the barbarian general was again sole master of Italy.

In the month of November Ricimer caused Libius Severus to be chosen Emperor. The latter remained four years on the throne; but history has nothing to say about him, inasmuch as Ricimer seems to have ruled during that time. Meanwhile Genseric, who had never forgotten the defeat he had suffered from him in 456, was trying to stir Leo I. against him, in the hope of creating a rupture between the two Emperors, and thus being enabled to get a creature of his own elected to the throne of the West. To this end he had already released Eudoxia and her daughter, and sent them back to Constantinople. But Ricimer was his equal in cunning, and when, after the death of Severus (November, 465), the throne of Italy lay vacant for eighteen months, and Leo I. expressed his wish that Procopius Anthemius should be chosen, Ricimer,

seeing his own advantage in it, had him promptly elected (467) and shortly afterwards took his daughter to wife.

Thus the East and the West were again close allies, and jointly started great preparations for war, in order to make an end of the Vandals. It is recorded that Constantinople collected 130,000 pounds' weight of gold, and that a fleet of a thousand ships carrying 100,000 men, was despatched during the spring of 468. Nevertheless this carefully prepared enterprise was seriously hindered by the hostile attitude of the two barbarian leaders, one of whom was omnipotent in Rome and the other in Constantinople. Both generals feared that a victorious campaign would seriously injure their position by augmenting the two Emperors' power. Accordingly, by dint of obstruction, Ricimer contrived that Anthemius should contribute a very small force to the war while he, in his turn, was putting every possible obstacle in the way of the campaign. With this evil purpose, he supported the unlucky plan of entrusting the direction of the war to Basiliscus, who was utterly incompetent, but was proposed as commander by his sister the Empress Verina. Therefore, in spite of the distinguished valour and preponderating numbers of the Roman forces, the campaign was ruined by the inexplicable blunders committed by the generals, and above all by Basiliscus, the commander-in-chief. The public voice declared both Aspar and Ricimer guilty of treason, more especially the latter, since he, it was said, had prevented reinforcements from being sent to Africa at a critical moment when they were absolutely needed to secure success.

This disastrous war led to many serious results. The arrogance of the Vandals was swelled to excess, while it took the East many years to replace the vast sums it had lost ; but what was of still more importance, the relations between Leo I. and Aspar became so strained that an open

rupture was unavoidable. For some time past Aspar's insolence had been growing always more unbearable. He had exacted a promise that one of his sons should be raised to partnership with the Emperor in the government, and repeatedly demanded the fulfilment of this promise with most disrespectful urgency. The people hated him as an Arian, and regarded his pretensions with the strongest aversion. He afterwards adopted a vicious mode of life, and, as we have already seen, it was by his fault that the safety of the Empire was so gravely imperilled in the last Vandal war. It may be also added that he had neither the courage nor daring of Count Ricimer, that Leo I. refused to become a passive tool in the hands of his general, and that the barbarians could never hope to attain in the East the same power they had achieved in the West. The Emperor knew this, and admitted into his army a larger force of brave and hardy Isaurians from the Taurus Mountains. By this means he was able to put a check on the insolence of the Goths and other Teuton soldiery; so, when the right hour seemed to have struck, in 471, he made use of his mountaineer forces and their chief Tarasicodissas—who afterwards succeeded him on the throne as the Emperor Zeno—to compass the death of Aspar. He likewise ordained the murder of the general's three sons; but as one of them had fled, and the second recovered from his wounds, only the third was killed. These deeds gained Leo I. the nickname of *Macellus*. Nevertheless he had rid himself of an inconvenient and dangerous master and delivered the Empire from the tyranny of the Goths and their fellows.

In Italy matters came to a very different end. The discord between Ricimer and the Emperor Anthemius grew worse from day to day, and the latter made public complaint of having been forced to marry his daughter to

a barbarian who still wore the skins of wild beasts. Hence conflict was unavoidable even here, although in this case the barbarian general was the stronger and keener-witted of the two. Ricimer was in command at Milan, and in 472 he advanced with his army to lay siege to Rome, where Anthemius was then resident, and still supported by a portion of the citizens. Among the besiegers was a certain Roman named Olybrius, whom Ricimer intended to raise to the throne after deposing Anthemius. Thus a general of the Empire was seen to play the part of an Alaric, by investing the Eternal City, when the Emperor himself was within the walls. After a siege of some months Rome was driven to surrender by famine and treason combined, and Ricimer entered the gates. Anthemius was murdered on the 11th of July, 472, but soon after (August 18th) his victorious foe died of hæmorrhage, and Olybrius followed him to the tomb on the 23rd of October. So ended the lengthy, confused, and painful drama of Count Ricimer; but nevertheless it had a sequel in the shape of a brief string of events of much the same kind as those we have described. For sixteen years Ricimer had been the master of Italy, and placed it, by his action, at the mercy of the barbarians. That indeed constitutes his real character in history. He was the precursor of Odovacar and Theodoric, who were now about to step upon the stage; was almost the connecting link between them and the generals Stilicho and Ætius. During his life Italy had become accustomed to see all real authority vested in a barbarian, and often without even the ghost of an Emperor to exercise even nominal power. But the country was not only given up into barbarian hands, but gradually became so entirely separated from Africa, Spain, and Gaul, as to form a new political unit. The various elements of which the Empire was still constituted, *i.e.*, the army, the government of

Constantinople and that of Ravenna, finally clashed together, and, bringing one epoch to a close, inaugurated a fresh period.

There seemed a probability that Ricimer's peculiar position, with exactly the same degree of power, would be inherited by his own nephew Gundobald, a Burgundian warrior, who had come to Italy to seek his fortune with his uncle's help ; for after leaving the Western throne vacant for five months, Gundobald compassed the nomination of Glycerius, the *Comes domesticorum* (Master of the Household Guard), who was proclaimed Emperor at Ravenna on the 5th of March, 473. But at this moment the quarrel with Constantinople came to a head, for the Eastern Emperor, Leo I., being near unto death, his meddlesome wife, Verina, caused her kinsman, Julius Nepos, to be named Emperor of the West, although he remained in Constantinople to the middle of 474. Then he went to Italy and was proclaimed Emperor on the 24th of June in the same year, while Gundobald disappeared from the scene, probably to take the place of his now deceased father, the Burgundian king. Glycerius vanished also, but in what manner is unrecorded. The only authentic information we have is that he was forced to accept consecration as a bishop in Dalmatia, and that soon afterwards he died.

Regarding the reign of Julius Nepos, very few details are known, although it represented the end of an historical period. This Emperor, being forced upon Italy by the party that had routed the barbarians in Constantinople, was by no means well received by the Italian legions, which were chiefly composed of barbarian soldiers and had carried the election of Glycerius. The peace concluded with the Visigoths of Gaul was the most notable event of Julius's reign. By the terms of this treaty, in order to save Italy from war, he ceded Auvergne to those

barbarians of the Arian sect, although that province had made a successful resistance and wished to remain united to the Empire. This act of his robbed him of the Romans' esteem, without enabling him to regain that of the barbarians which he had already forfeited. Thus the public discontent grew apace, and finally culminated in another rebellion, that—perhaps by the natural force of things—was headed by Orestes. The Eastern Empire being then plunged in disorder, this leader found it easy to overthrow Julius Nepos, and attacking him at Ravenna, drove him to seek refuge at Salona, in August, 475. This was the same Dalmatian city in which the ex-Emperor Glycerius had been compelled to assume the episcopal mitre, and he was probably still living when his fugitive successor arrived there.

Orestes is the last of the series of generals who, during many years, made and unmade emperors at their will, and held the Imperial power in their grasp, until they finally yielded it to the barbarians alone. Orestes was the instrument of this decisive change. A native of Illyricum he was of Roman origin, and so, too, his wife. But he had dwelt a long time at the Hunnish Court, and, as we already know, Attila had sent him on an embassy to Constantinople. Thus he had become even more closely assimilated with the barbarians; and this may have been the reason why, grasping the supreme power as his barbarian predecessors had done, he, too, was afraid to assume the robes of Empire. Nevertheless he dared to accomplish the design that Stilicho and Ætius had long nourished in vain; for he contrived that his own son should be elected Emperor. This son had never lived among the barbarians, and was more Roman than himself on the maternal side. On account of his extreme youth, his name of Romulus Augustus was altered to the somewhat contemptuous one of Romulus Augustulus. So, by

the irony of fate, he who was to be the last Emperor of the West, bore the name of the first King and first Emperor of Rome.

It might have been supposed that Orestes being in command of the army, and the father of an Emperor who was still a minor, would have felt that his own position was assured, especially since Genseric, now an aged man, had consented to conclude a treaty of peace with Ravenna and Constantinople that preserved both the East and the West from Vandal attacks for the space of two generations. On the contrary, however, a germ of weakness lay concealed in that which appeared to be a source of strength. Roman and barbarian qualities could not easily coalesce; the one element or the other was bound to be stamped out. In Stilicho's case, as we have seen, the barbarian succumbed to the Roman element; in that of Orestes the contrary occurred, owing to the difference of the times. The army under his command was composed of various tribes: Turcilingi, Scyri, and Heruli, all differing but little from the Goths. The number of these barbarians had gone on increasing from the first by continual small additions; and now that they formed the whole Imperial army in Italy, they wished to settle permanently in the country, and thus gain certain means of subsistence there in peace as well as war, as was already the case in other Western provinces of the Empire. Accordingly they demanded one-third of the land. Hence the conflict arose that was to bring Orestes to ruin. Cession of territory implied the permanent establishment of the barbarians in Italy, and consequently Italy would be at their mercy. Orestes, being of Roman origin and Roman in feeling, could not decide in favour of this step, and indeed deliberately opposed it. Thereupon the soldiers rose in rebellion, and deserting him, proclaimed Odovacar in his stead, by raising him on the

shield (August 23, 476). Odovacar was a barbarian officer of Ricimer's army, and had fought under that chief at the siege of Rome. He promised to grant the soldiery all they had asked and been denied. Orestes took refuge in Pavia, but being pursued thither by his rival, barely escaped with his life. The city was captured, put to the sack for two whole days, and the barbarians only ceased from slaughter on learning that Orestes had been overtaken and killed at Piacenza on the 28th of August, 476. This tragedy has many points of resemblance with Stilicho's death-scene in the same city during the year 408. The cry then, however, was: "Death to the barbarian!" now it was, "Death to the Roman!"

Odovacar hastened to Ravenna, where he found the trembling boy, Augustulus, the last representative of Roman imperialism. He spared his life, but relegated him to the Palace of Lucullus, at Pizzofalcone, near the old city of Naples,¹ with a pension of six thousand solidi. There the deposed ruler lived quietly, though for how long a period is unknown, and endeavoured, as we shall presently see, to promote Odovacar's success. Genseric's death occurred shortly afterwards, and this event greatly strengthened the position of Odovacar, with whose career the ancient order of things came to an end, and that of the Middle Ages finally opened. The Empire of the West had fallen, the history of Italy had begun.

¹ There was a common but mistaken belief that Lucullus's villa was situated in the small Castello dell' Uovo.

BOOK II

GOTHS AND BYZANTINES

CHAPTER I

ODOVACAR

ODOVACAR was born in 433, and now, at the age of forty-six, was the leader of an army composed of various races, every one of which claimed him as their own. Most authorities declare him to have been of the Scyrian tribe, but some declare that he was the son of the same Edecon whom Attila had sent with Orestes on the famous embassy to Theodosius II. There is no doubt that he was one of the barbarians who joined the Huns in Attila's day, but separated from them after that king's death. He was still a youth when he set out with a band of followers to seek his fortune in Italy. His route lay through Noricum, a province that for thirty years (453-82) had been continually devastated, pillaged, and plunged in anarchy. No form of government had survived there, and the only authority that helped to keep life in the social body, was that of St. Severinus. This holy man, dwelling in a lonely hermitage, exercised a prodigious moral influence over the inhabitants who gave prompt obedience to his voice. Legend relates that one day Odovacar—then an unknown youth—came to the

door of the hermit's cell. Being of lofty stature, he had to cross the threshold with bended head, and he asked the saint to grant him his blessing. Severinus blessed him, and then added : "*Vade ad Italiam*, for although thou art clad in coarsest skins, a great fortune awaits thee in that land. In fact Odovacar was already in Italy between 460 and 470, and in 472 he was fighting in Ricimer's army before the walls of Rome. In 476, as we have seen, the soldiers proclaimed him raised on their shields, and he filled the place both of Augustulus and Orestes. The office of Emperor of the West, already reduced to a shadow by the overwhelming strength of the generals who did all its work, now vanishes altogether before the barbarian usurper. So, for the first time in the world's history, Italy appears as a new and independent political entity. But that a barbarian should rule over the land at the head of a barbarian army, was a state of things so entirely unprecedented that none could perceive on what legal basis his authority could stand. Hence Odovacar neither dared to take the title of Emperor nor that of King of Italy ; he was only a barbarian king. What right had he therefore to supreme command in the Peninsula, the ancient seat of Empire ?

The only true and legitimate sovereign was now enthroned at Constantinople, and therefore two State embassies waited upon him between 477 and 478. One was sent from Salona in the name of Julius Nepos, who asked to be reinstated in his rightful position at Ravenna, whence he had been driven by force. The second came in the name of the Roman Senate and of Augustulus, who very probably, in accordance with previous stipulations arranged with Odovacar, now sought to reward that chief for having spared his life while depriving him of his throne. In fact, the orators constituting this second embassy came to explain that the Romans felt no need

of an Emperor of their own, since one sufficed for both the East and the West.¹ Odovacar could govern Italy with the title of Patrician, in the name of the Emperor, to whom he therefore sent back the Imperial insignia (*ornamenta Palatii*).

In 474 Leo I. had been succeeded at Constantinople by his nephew, Leo II. The latter being still a minor, was under the regency of his father, Tarasicodissus, or Zeno, as he was named by the Greeks, who, on his son's early decease, became the veritable Emperor. Soon afterwards, Basiliscus the Monophysite, aided by his intriguing sister, the Empress Verina, widow of Leo I., rose in revolt against Zeno, and drove him from the throne, on which, however, he was replaced in 477 by a counter-revolution of the Orthodox party. Accordingly, when, between 477 and 478, the ambassadors sent by Augustulus and the Senate appeared before him, he was in a difficult position, for he had no wish to recognise the illegally elected Odovacar, but felt powerless at that moment to depose the man who had forcibly usurped the Imperial authority in Italy. Therefore he had recourse to one of the diplomatic quibbles so often employed by the Byzantines. His official reply to the Romans was conceived as follows: "Two Emperors were sent to you from Constantinople, Anthemius and Nepos; you slew the first and deposed the second. Now you must make appeal to Nepos, who still remains the sole legitimate and acknowledged Emperor of the West." But, together with this official reply, he addressed Odovacar in a private letter with the title of Patrician. Thus, although practically accepting the accomplished fact, he reserved his opinion as to its legality, and kept his own authority intact. Meanwhile Odovacar assumed the government of Italy as the nominal

¹ "Proprio Imperatore se non indigere; unum Imperatorem sufficere, qui utriusque Imperii fines tueretur" (Malchus, "Fragm.," 10).

subordinate of Constantinople, but in reality with all the freedom of action of an independent prince.

The first and principal question that Odovacar had to decide was that promised division of the land which had been the origin of his power. As to the precise manner in which this division was effected no information has come down to us. We can only form hypothetical suppositions. But we know for certain that such division was not made, as was credited by many, on any newly invented system resulting from the barbarian conquest. On the contrary, in Italy as elsewhere, it was merely the modification of a system already existing in the Empire. The added burdens it imposed on the inhabitants were really much lighter than they seemed. In one way or another the army had been always a charge on the people even as the numerous subsidies given to keep the barbarians quiet and the enormous expenses of the Imperial wars had been invariably paid from the people's purse. Soldiers, wherever they were billeted, were entitled to occupy one-third of their host's dwelling, of which they too were styled the "hosts," and naturally they received full pay as well as free quarters. Then the troops permanently detached for the defence of the frontier lines (*limitanei*) had not only free quarters but a certain proportion of land to cultivate for their own benefit. Therefore, if Odovacar's soldiers, who formed the army destined to defend Italy, were now assigned one-third of the soil, and were to till it and live on its produce, this arrangement was no innovation after all. There was one novelty, however, in that the barbarians had now to be provided for, even when their military service was over, and not the able-bodied alone, but also the old folk, women, and children. This measure had been imposed to satisfy the forcibly asserted claims of mutinous legionaries.

But there is no reason to believe that this system of allotment was enforced everywhere at once, nor that where it prevailed every part of the soil was divided. Odovacar's army was by no means large enough to occupy the whole of Italy. His barbarians were only quartered in certain provinces, and only in these was there any division of the land. Small proprietors, where any yet remained, were left in peace, since it was useless to split up holdings which barely provided for their owners' needs. This class, therefore, was left *in statu quo*, and was even less heavily taxed than before, inasmuch as the barbarians were too ignorant to know how to collect money with the oppressive regularity of the Imperial revenue office. Nor was there any striking change in the condition of the working classes in the towns. Thus the small farmers, peasants, and slaves who cultivated the soil and were transferred together with it to barbarian owners, remained more or less as they were before, and often, indeed, in a better condition. The real sufferers were the proprietors of large estates, but even these are believed to have paid lighter taxes than before on such share of their land as they were allowed to retain. In any case landed property was far more split up than before. Then, as the barbarians—following their old native customs—preferred country to town life, all arable land, which had long lacked the labour required to make it productive, was now cultivated on a larger and improved scale. The old Roman administration was left intact throughout the country, so too the Roman method of levying the taxes; but these were not increased; on the contrary, as far as we can discover, they must have been lowered. Bishop Epiphanius obtained considerable exemptions for his flock at Pavia, and also throughout Liguria, where all taxes had been recently raised to a preposterous amount.

Odovacar's rule, lasting about thirteen years, was con-

fined almost exclusively to Italy, the subject provinces being now altogether detached from that country. Even Provence, the most Romanised portion of Gaul, was abandoned to the Visigoths. Rhoetia, which had been always considered as an integral appendage to Italy, still belonged to it in the same fashion as Sicily, although the Vandals occupied various parts of that island in accordance with the treaty concluded in 442. They likewise held Corsica, Sardinia, and the Balearic Isles. For the moment, at least, this new state of things saved the country from being exhausted by other great wars, and therefore the reign of Odovacar was for some time a period of rest and relief from public calamities, although we learn that deeds of violence and spoliation occasionally occurred, and became more frequent towards the end of his rule. As time went on Odovacar's position became greatly improved in some respects. At first, in fact, and as long as the deposed Emperor Nepos lived, it was a decidedly illegal position, but at the latter's death in 480 everything was changed. It is true that Odovacar continued to bear the sole title of "Patrician"; could neither assume the title of Emperor nor even that of King of Italy; but he had increased power to act as an independent sovereign. He now began to nominate the Consuls of the West, and these were recognised in the East. The general unity of the Empire, of which Zeno was the head, was, theoretically, left uncontested; practically, however, Odovacar's authority was far greater, and was implicitly acknowledged to be so. At Ravenna he was enabled to collect a fleet that served to protect him from Vandal incursions, and between 481 and 482 he made an expedition to Dalmatia and annexed that region to his own State. Although this measure highly displeased the Emperor, and afterwards led to very harmful results for himself, he had augmented his territories, and no evil came of it for the moment.

While affairs were in this state the political life of the Italian people remained practically extinct. Hence all the more energy was manifested in the development of their spiritual life under the supremacy of the Pope.

But to a considerable extent the tendency of religious activity was determined by the relation, or, more strictly speaking, the opposition, still existing between the Roman Church and the Church of Constantinople, where there was never any truce to the doctrinal disputes which were so repugnant to the Roman Catholic spirit. Fierce conflicts were now being waged in the East between the Nestorians, who declared that the Virgin was only the Mother of Christ in so far as He was man, and the Arians and the Monophysites, for it was maintained by the latter that the humanity and divinity of Jesus were one and the same thing. But as it was exactly in the name of this doctrine that Basiliscus had driven Zeno from the throne, the latter, who owed his restoration to the Orthodox Catholics, was willing to do anything to prevent the dispute from bursting out again. Accordingly, between 482 and 483 he published an epistle known as the "Henoticon," which was believed to have been inspired, if not written, by the Patriarch Acacius. In this letter he tried to conciliate both the Orthodox and the Monophysites, by taking a middle course. But Rome never approved of similar half-measures, never admitted the idea of the Emperor pronouncing judgment in religious disputes. Hence Pope Simplicius (468-483) unhesitatingly condemned both the "Henoticon" and its prompter Acacius.

This struggle, in which, seconded by the Italians, Simplicius showed, as usual, a truly Roman tenacity, fomented the existing antagonism between the East and the West, and was therefore advantageous to Odovacar. At that time the Pope was morally, and even more than morally speaking, the most powerful personage in Italy. If

Odoacar, as an Arian, had openly opposed him, Simplicius could have easily roused the whole country against him, and made it impossible for him to maintain his position in Italy. But while the religious dispute continued to rage between Rome and Constantinople the Pope and Odoacar were bound by common interests to reciprocal support.

Pope Simplicius died on the 2nd of March, 483, whereupon Odoacar made a false move, of which he felt the consequences before long. Undoubtedly it was very important for him to control the choice of a new Pontiff. He sought not only to prevent the riots which had often caused bloodshed in the streets of Rome on similar occasions, but also desired a Pope well disposed to himself. Thus when the preliminary assembly failed to agree in the choice of a candidate, the Pretorian Prefect, Cecina Basilius, suddenly intervened in Odoacar's name, and declared that no election would be valid without the King's voice. On this point, he said, the King was obeying the wish of the deceased Pope, who, before expiring, had given him directions with regard to the election. A decree was likewise issued prohibiting the alienation of Church property and threatening anathema on all who failed to respect it. After this the Assembly was summoned to sanction the decree and decide the election, which resulted in favour of Felix II. (483-492),¹ the candidate recommended by Odoacar. The King's action in the matter does not seem to have excited any serious complaint at the time ; for it was a known fact that not only had the Emperor of the East invariably exercised great influence in the Conclaves, Synods, Councils, and all other affairs of the Church, but that even in Italy the

¹ Others designated him as Felix III., it being disputed whether Felix II. (355-365), the rival of Pope Liberius, had been regularly elected or no.

Emperor Honorius had decided the contest between Eulalius and Bonifacius when both were elected to the Papal throne. It has also been proved that the Emperor of the West had the right of intervention and decision in questions of this kind; indeed the clergy themselves frequently appealed to his verdict. Hence it may be supposed that Odovacar had no idea that he was acting illegally, much less forcing the election of a Pope to his own taste, but that the choice of Felix II. was veritably suggested to him by the dying Simplicius. On the other hand, he was not an emperor, but a barbarian king of the Arian faith. Accordingly he had no reason to think that the Roman Church, always so jealous of its prerogative, could by any possibility approve of his conduct. However this may be, even Felix II. hotly continued the attack against the "Henoticon" and Acacius, and excommunicating the latter, forwarded to Constantinople his decree to that effect. This affair caused a schism that lasted for thirty-five years (484-519), during which period Rome never yielded a jot, and finally secured the triumph of the Orthodox doctrines. But although this strife proved entirely advantageous to Odovacar, his interference in the Papal election had cast into the Roman Church the seed of a deep and threatening distrust towards him.

Meanwhile another and graver complication of a political kind was coming to the surface. Beyond Rhoetia lay Noricum, the province in which Salzburg now stands, and that extended to the Danube beyond which dwelt the tribe of the Rugi. As we have previously noted, the whole of this Noric region had been wasted and reduced to the last extremity of wretchedness by continual barbarian raids; and the only power preserving some sort of social life was that wielded by St. Severinus, described, in the words of his biographer Eugippus, as a thoroughly Latin man : *loquela*

tamen ipsius manifestabat hominem omnino latinum. In his hermit's cell he collected raiment and food for the needy, and gave counsels and commands which were willingly obeyed even by the barbarians themselves. This furnished another visible proof of the almost omnipotent power that religion then exercised over the minds of men. It was solely through the efforts of St. Severinus that the Roman inhabitants of the region escaped total destruction. But he died about the year 482, and his death was most disastrous for Noricum. The Rugi immediately poured in, ravaging and sacking everything, even the saint's cloister and cell. Had it been possible, says Eugippus, they would have carried off the very walls. Indeed, had the Rugi taken permanent possession of this region, they would have constituted a serious danger for Odovacar, since he would have had them close to the borders of his kingdom, and always ready to push across them, on account of the wasted state of the land. Now Zeno, in fact, was urging them to invasion, from the usual Oriental policy of neutralising the barbarians by fomenting hostility between different tribes, and likewise because he was very suspicious of Odovacar, since the latter not only acted more and more in the style of an independent sovereign, but had recently annexed Dalmatia. Also, shortly before, certain persons who were hatching a plot against Zeno had made appeal to Odovacar; and although the King had refused them his aid, that did not prevent the affair from greatly augmenting the Emperor's ill-feeling and suspicion. Consequently the Rugi were incited to advance against him, and Odovacar was forced into war with them.

In 487 he began the campaign with his barbarian army, which, according to Paulus Diaconus, also included many Italians—*nec non Italiæ populi*. With these forces he vanquished the Rugi, capturing their king and putting

to flight the King's son. Nevertheless, this war had many and serious results. A great number of the less impoverished inhabitants of Noricum emigrated to Italy and brought with them the body of St. Severinus. After being taken to various places, this relic was afterwards, at a widow woman's prayer, transferred to the vicinity of Naples and deposited on the site now known as that of Castello dell' Uovo. The son of the Rugian King sought refuge with the Ostrogoths, who were then ruled by the valiant Theodoric, of the princely Amal line, and tried to induce him to make war upon Odovacar. As the Emperor, as we shall presently see, likewise encouraged him to the same effect, events of startling importance soon occurred in Italian history.

CHAPTER II

THEODORIC AND THE OSTROGOTHS IN ITALY

THE majority of the Ostrogoths had remained united with the Huns in ancient Dacia, and, like other Teutonic tribes, only separated from them when Attila's death caused the Hun empire to split up and melt away like a dream. Then the Ostrogoths occupied Pannonia, under the rule of three brothers of the noble Amal line. They seem to have dwelt in that country more or less in the position of *fæderati*; and they kept up the accustomed persistent disputes with the Empire, regarding the lands they demanded and the stipend or tribute they claimed. All this led to a conflict, at the close of which an annual tribute was fixed, and, to guarantee the continuance of peace, Theodoric, a boy of eight years and son of Theodomir, one of the three Amal brothers, was sent as a hostage to Constantinople. This event proved to be of great importance, since in this way a gifted lad, full of courage and ambition, and with a great future before him, had the advantage of being trained to arms on the Roman system. Meanwhile one of the Amal brethren died; another, on being driven by famine to seek his fortune in Italy with some of his people, was encouraged, as we have mentioned, by Imperial subsidies to settle in Gaul. Thus Theodomir alone remained in Pannonia, and his son Theodoric, who returned from Constantinople

at the age of eighteen, immediately undertook, on his own account, a campaign against the Sarmatians, and proved his great valour in the field. In 474 his father died, and although his mother was only a concubine, nevertheless the people willingly elected him as their chief in virtue of his illustrious Amal blood and his soldierly prowess. But he then had to solve the problem of feeding his tribe, for the resources of Pannonia were exhausted, and the Emperor supplied little money.

At this time there was another Gothic tribe in the Eastern Empire, led by another Theodoric, son of Triarius, and surnamed Strabo, because of his squinting eyes. This Eastern Goth had been moved to deep resentment by Aspar's miserable end, and aspired to obtain the post that general had filled in Constantinople. Accordingly he joined Basiliscus when the latter revolted and drove Zeno from the throne. Theodoric the Amal, on the contrary, sided with Zeno, and helped him to gain the victory, whereupon the Emperor naturally overwhelmed him with honours, giving him the titles of Patrician and *Magister Militum*, and likewise adopting him as a son. Afterwards, however, Zeno was involved in difficulties by the ever-increasing pretensions of the rival Gothic chiefs, who were both in arms and both claiming to be appointed stipendiary captains of the Empire. Zeno, on the contrary, would have preferred to be rid of them both; but this was impossible. Accordingly he asked the advice of the Senate, and was told that, as the exchequer could not be burdened with the expense of maintaining two captains with their respective armies, he must decide to retain only one. He naturally chose Theodoric the Amal, who had come to his aid in the moment of danger, and assigned him the task of keeping the other in check. But when the two barbarians met, they ended by combining against Zeno, whose only hope now lay in their mutual jealousy,

which he did his best to foment. Thus he was compelled to oscillate continually between the two, until, by Strabo's death in 481, Theodoric the Amal remained alone and more powerful than ever at the head of the united Gothic tribes. For the following six years, sometimes in harmony with the Emperor, rendering him important services and rewarded with honours and gold, at others, detached from the Court and making raids on his own account for the purpose of exacting fresh favours. In 483 he was promoted to be *Magister militiæ præsentis*; in 484 he was appointed Consul. At that time he again did good service to Zeno by defeating his enemies; then once more assumed a threatening attitude by advancing to the very gates of Constantinople, ravaging the country and burning towns.

It is easy to see why Zeno should have longed to rid himself by some means of so uncomfortable a neighbour, and sought to liberate the Empire from a barbarian tyranny that threatened a revival not only of Aspar's times but even the positive rise of a second Ricimer in the East. What, however, was to be done? The old system of pitting one barbarian against another seemed to be no longer feasible now that one of the two rival Goths was dead. Odovacar, however, was still ruling in Italy, and, for reasons we have already explained, Zeno had cause to be highly displeased with him, especially since rumours had spread that he was in secret agreement with the rebel conspirators. As we have seen, it was this suspicion that moved Zeno to stir the Rugi against Odovacar. But the latter defeated his assailants, occupied Noricum, invaded the land of the Rugi, captured their king and queen, and drove the king's son to seek refuge with Theodoric and implore him to avenge his wrongs. Theodoric seemed very willing to undertake that risky task, perhaps because the land of the Rugi marched with

the Pannonian border, so that their defeat was a peril to his country, or because he hoped that victory would make him master of the fertile plains of Italy, where his people could find a safe and settled abode. In addition to all this, the discord that had now broken out between Odovacar and the Pope had weakened the former and consequently made him less formidable. Odovacar's annexation of Dalmatia, his entry into the Rugian land, his increasingly independent rule, and the manner in which he had long supported the Bishop of Rome against the Emperor made the latter welcome the idea of a radical change in Italian affairs; for if Theodoric left Constantinople and settled in Italy he could not only inflict punishment on Odovacar, but could also adopt a more resolute attitude towards the Pope. Moved by these considerations, Theodoric was willing to undertake the expedition and Zeno to encourage the attempt. It has been much disputed by historians which of the two first started the idea. According to Jordanes, Theodoric proposed it to Zeno, saying, "If I am defeated, I shall be no longer a burden to thee; but should I conquer the *tyrant*" (not being a legitimate sovereign, they designated Odovacar by that term), "I will govern the country in thy name, *vestro dono, vestroque munere possidebo*." But Procopius declares that Zeno persuaded Theodoric to invade Italy, and Anonymus Valesii states that Zeno sent the Goth *ad defendendam sibi Italiam*. The real fact is that the one wished to go and the other to make him go, their common interests urging both towards the same goal. Accordingly, Theodoric finally started for Italy in the autumn of 488.

The enterprise was not exclusively military, but rather an invasion, or "trek," of an armed people, since Theodoric now advanced in the name of the Empire, followed by all the old folk, women, and children, of the

tribe, by a train of waggons loaded with household goods which served as habitations during the journey, and also carried hand-mills for the grinding of corn. The nomad multitude were known as Ostrogoths ; but, as usual, comprised a mixture of different races, although all bore the name of the Ostrogoth majority. The various tribes had been drawn together by the valour and reputation of their joint chief, by the forays and campaigns undertaken at his order, and by the general and pressing need of seeking a land where they could find a permanent home affording means of subsistence. There is no possibility of discovering their exact numbers. Some authorities put the armed men at 40,000, others at a still higher figure. Writers variously calculate the total number of men, women, aged persons, and children at from 200,000 to 300,000 souls. Their route led over the Julian Alps, and was a fatiguing, and sometimes disastrous, journey. The cold was severe ; their hair, beard, and clothes froze on them. They had to live on the country, either by the fruits of the chase or by plundering all the places they attacked on the way. Their first sanguinary encounter was with the Gepidæ, but other combats followed, and finally, after eight months of peril and hardship on the same road previously trodden by Theodosius, Alaric, and Attila, their descent into Italy was accomplished in July, 489. On the 28th of August, by the river Isonzo, and not far from Aquileia, they first met Odovacar in battle.

The latter was a valiant leader, commanded a better and larger army, and had also taken up a strong position. But he could neither withstand the first furious charge of the Goths, nor the superior strategy of their chief. Another battle was fought on the banks of the Adige, near Verona (September 30, 489), and in this, although Odovacar was again defeated, Theodoric must have suffered heavy loss, seeing that, instead of continuing his

advance, he retired on Milan, and later behind the walls of Pavia. Odovacar then directed his march towards Rome, hoping that the Eternal City might be easily entered and permanently occupied. The possession of Rome would have been an important assistance, not only morally but materially, inasmuch as for the rest of the war all South Italy in his rear would have been safe. But, on the contrary, the difficulty of his position was now clearly shown. The gates of Rome were shut in his face, and the inhabitants of Italy began to show him marked hostility; partly on account of his recent conflict with the Church, partly for the increased deeds of spoliation recently committed by him, either from irregularity of administration or the growing necessities of war. The Church had taken advantage of all these causes of discontent in order to excite the populace against him; and before long it was openly said that the clergy had organised a general conspiracy against him somewhat, it would seem, in the style of the Sicilian Vespers.¹ Worse still, there were many desertions from his ranks, and when Tufa, his own *Magister Militum*, passed over to the enemy with other captains, his army began to dwindle at an alarming rate. But presently Tufa, after obtaining from Theodoric the command of a small body of Goths, deserted his new chief and returned to Odovacar, who had the men he brought with him promptly put to death. Hence, it may be supposed that Tufa's first flight was only a stratagem. Nevertheless, many real cases of desertion occurred in Theodoric's army as well as Odovacar's. For, in fact, these great hordes of mixed barbarian tribes, as we have noted more than once, were little more than bands of adventurers in the service of the Empire, men of no country and no faith, solely guided by the personal

¹ Dahn, ii. 80; also Hodgkin iii. 225-6; both based on the authority of Ennodius's Panegyric on Theodoric.

interest of their chiefs, and often of their sub-chiefs, who all acted on their own account.

Thus both sides were hampered by great and increasing difficulties ; but both made tremendous efforts to overcome them ; hence the war dragged on for a very long time. Odovacar made a worthy resistance to the foe, for Theodoric had been forced to shut himself up in Pavia, where the throng had been so great on his first entry that his men suffered enormously. The clergy came to their succour under the orders of Bishop Epiphanius, who laboured heroically to relieve the general misery, regardless of party or race, and ransomed from slavery many prisoners on either side at his own expense. Meanwhile Odovacar had reorganised his force and entered Milan, ready once more to measure swords with his rival. But now other barbarian tribes poured in to have a share in the war, thereby altering and greatly confusing its course. The Burgundians crossed the Alps, ostensibly to help Odovacar, though their principal object was to plunder the land for their own benefit. The Visigoths instead were moved by community of race to join with Theodoric, and fought in his ranks at the battle of the Adda on the 11th of August, 490. Here Odovacar was foredoomed to defeat. He had been able to make a vigorous stand against Theodoric, although the latter was backed by the authority of the Emperor and the Church, and actively assisted by rebels in arms ; but, faced by the combined forces of the Visigoths and Ostrogoths, he was obliged to retreat upon Ravenna. There he bravely withstood a siege that lasted three years, inasmuch as Theodoric was unable to maintain a vigorous blockade by sea, and had to meet determined sorties on the inland side of the city. Meanwhile, however, the Ostrogoth chief was practically master of all Italy, where he daily acquired increased favour and strength. In the greater part of the country

there seemed to be a truce to bloodshed and the clash of war: *ubi primum respirare fas est a continuorum tempestate bellorum*.¹

But the struggle went on very vigorously at Ravenna, and Theodoric was finally enabled to blockade the port, when the capture of Rimini enabled him to collect a sufficient number of ships. Thereupon the besieged city began to suffer cruelly from famine, and, according to the Ravennese chronicler Agnello, many spared by the sword perished by starvation. At last, in February, 493, the fifth year of the war and the third of the siege, Odovacar was forced to surrender. On the 25th of that month he gave his son as a hostage, and on the 27th the terms of capitulation were definitely settled with the aid of the Archbishop of Ravenna. This, too, was another proof of the lofty part then played by the clergy, and therefore by the Church, in all public affairs of the greatest moment.

The exact terms of the treaty are imperfectly known, and have accordingly formed the theme of numerous disputes. What is certain is that Odovacar surrendered on condition of his life being spared: *accepta fide, securus se esse de sanguine*, as Anonymus Valesii has recorded. But the Byzantine writers append a very singular clause to these conditions, by which the conquered chief was to be allowed a share in the conqueror's government and even retain the command of a portion of the army. It is very hard to understand how this could possibly be, especially since Theodoric had come at Zeno's command for the express purpose of vanquishing and expelling Odovacar. For even admitting the existence of so unlikely a pact, it is incredible that it should have been honestly concluded by either party, or that any one could

¹ These words are contained in a letter by Pope Gelasius, believed to have been written in 492.

have had faith in it. On the 5th of March, 493, Theodoric entered Ravenna in triumph, all the clergy coming forth to meet him, chanting Psalms, and with the Archbishop at the head of the procession. On the 15th of the same month he invited Odovacar to a grand banquet, but the moment the vanquished chief appeared, hidden soldiers rushed upon him, and Theodoric, drawing his sword, dealt him a mortal blow with his own hand. "Where is God?" cried the deposed prince. His assailant, noting that his keen sword-blade had pierced deep into his enemy's breast, with scarcely any resistance, remarked with a barbarously cynical smile, "One would think he had no bones!" All Odovacar's kinsmen and friends shared his fate, more or less. Some apologists of Theodoric declared that the killing of Odovacar was simply an act of revenge, on discovering that the latter was treacherously plotting against him; but this hypothesis is only another proof of the hatred and distrust felt on both sides, and of the consequent impossibility of any real peace between them.

CHAPTER III

THE REIGN OF THEODORIC

AFTER this truly barbaric deed, Theodoric could rightly consider himself the absolute master of Italy. His actual position, in fact, was little different from that held by Odovacar. The latter had commanded a confused multitude of separate tribes, Heruli, Turcilingi, and more particularly Scyri. Theodoric, too, was at the head of a medley of various races, of Gepidæ, Rugi, Breoni, Romans, or rather Romanised barbarians,¹ but, the greater number being Ostrogoths, all were given that name. Therefore even his followers formed no distinct people united by the bond of patriotism, but rather a horde of adventurers bound together by the general need of earning their daily bread by warfare and plunder, and—like Odovacar's men—organised on the military system of the Romans. As we have already seen, Theodoric did not invade Italy as the king of a Germanic people, but as a Patrician, as the representative and mandatary of the Emperor. The next in command was a *Magister militum*, while the *Comites* presiding over the different provinces of Italy had different divisions of the army under their orders. The chief diversity between Odovacar and the Ostrogoth lay in Theodoric's personal character

¹ Sybel, "Entstehung, des deutschen Königsthums ; *vide* 2nd edition, p. 283—4.

and superior talent in politics and war. His intellect and, in some degree, his temperament also had been moulded at Constantinople, for he there became an admirer of Roman civilisation, without ever ceasing entirely to be a barbarian. Although it is a certain fact that he had no literary culture, it is hard to believe that—as generally said—he was unable to write his own name. It is true that he was accustomed to make his signature with a gold stamp, engraved with the first four letters of his name, but this may have been to save time when he had to append his signature in diplomatic fashion to masses of official documents.

It is not to be imagined that Theodoric's Ostrogoths continued to retain all their primitive old Teuton institutions. Although he had brought a whole people—even the old folk, women, and children—that is, a huge multitude—in his train, he was more particularly the military chief and commander of a host of various tribes who had dwelt first in the land of the Huns and then within the Empire. Hence his followers no longer observed the method of holding property in common, as practised in the old Germanic village, nor that of having popular assemblies as checks on the royal power. Theodoric ruled with military absolutism, only consulting his army on exceptional occasions. In any case, his Goths could never have legislated for the Romans nor the Romans for the Goths. He came with the title of Patrician to reconquer Italy for the Empire, the unity of which, theoretically at all events, had never been entirely destroyed. For even while there were two Imperial thrones, whenever an Emperor of the West died, his power passed to the monarch of the East until his successor was chosen. There is no doubt that, like Ricimer, Orestes, and Odovacar, Theodoric also aspired to become the true and effective master of Italy, and, possibly,

a species of Emperor of the West. But the sway he desired, and partly achieved, was in open contradiction with the mission he had accepted and undertaken : hence this sway had to be legalised, and as no one but the Emperor could do it, he appealed to him without delay. In 490, immediately after the battle of the Adda, when he already knew himself to be lord of Italy, although his entry into Ravenna had not yet taken place, he despatched an embassy to the Emperor, asking permission to assume the regal dignity, *ab eodem operans se vestem induere regiam*.¹ This embassy, however, produced no result, for Zeno died in April, 491, and his successor, Anastasius, sent no reply. By that time, having already occupied Ravenna and killed Odovacar there, Theodoric was proclaimed King by his Goths without awaiting the new Emperor's decision. This election, however, failed to give him the legal authority over the Romans that could emanate from the Emperor alone. In actual fact, he was no king, but a tyrant like Odovacar, the man whom he had attacked, for that very reason, in the name of the Empire.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of his position was much lightened in 498, when, having gained a considerable increase of power, he finally succeeded, through another embassy, in obtaining from Anastasius the royal insignia (*omnia ornamenta Palatii*) which Odovacar had forwarded to Constantinople. But there is no reason to believe that the new authority was conferred upon him without its limits being accurately fixed and its attributes more or less defined. Both Cassiodorus and Procopius give hints regarding terms and conditions. The second writer relates, in fact, that the Goths, when overcome by Belisarius at a later date, stated to their conqueror that

¹ "Gothi sibi confirmaverunt Theodoricum regem, non expectantes jussionem novi Principis" (Anonymus Valesii, xii. 57). This proves that he had not been a real king of the Goths ; but only perhaps a Germanic *Princeps*, or as Sybel expresses it, a *Gaukönig*.

they had faithfully observed all the terms and conditions imposed by the Empire. Theodoric undoubtedly was the commander of the army, was supreme judge, and empowered to appoint all State officials. But it were a mistake to imagine that he, therefore, became a species of Emperor of the West, or even a king of the Romans independent of the sovereign, at whose bidding he had come. Theodoric had no power of promulgating real laws, but only edicts for Italy, which were never to exceed the limits already prescribed by the laws issued at Constantinople, and applied throughout the Empire.

He continued to elect Consuls whose office was Imperial, and therefore exercised in all parts of the Empire. One Consul was chosen in the East ; the other in Italy by Theodoric ; but his choice had to be ratified at Constantinople. So too, the Emperor alone had the right to coin money stamped with his own image. All this serves to prove that the unity of the Empire was still preserved.

Theodoric's rule only extended over Italy, although he occasionally ventured to exercise it in the islands and in Africa. But no mention was made of an Empire of the West. Nor did the Emperor ever recognise the existence of an hereditary Gothic kingship, and therefore Theodoric's successors were always obliged to ask the sanction of Constantinople, without which they had merely the status of tyrants. Theodoric's government had another special characteristic. The whole civil administration remained in Roman hands ; military affairs in those of the Goths, of whom the army was composed. This caused many writers to declare that Romans were forbidden to carry arms at that period. But there is here a confusion with the severe prohibition to that effect, decreed by Theodoric at a much later time, when he began to fear a rebellion in Italy. Nor is it easy to believe that Romans could have been absolutely excluded from the

army, particularly when one recalls the very wide significance the term "Roman" then possessed, and the additional fact of the Goth army being composed of many races of diverse origin. It was indubitably a Goth army, therefore every member of it was known as a Goth. But Cassiodorus himself, while often repeating that the defence of the State was entrusted to the Goths, quotes in his letters (viii. 21 and 22) the instance of certain Roman nobles, under Theodoric's tutelage, who were taught the language of the Goths and shared in their military training. Certainly only a few Romans were admitted into the army, and even those grudgingly, but they were not wholly excluded. Another proof that they were not forbidden to bear arms, is furnished by the same writer, when he relates how he once had to desert his studies and hastily arm his people for the defence of South Italy against the Byzantines' threatened attack. It was impossible to draw a hard-and-fast line between the two races. Hence, although the administrative branch was assuredly left to the Romans, one cannot suppose that all Goths were excluded from it. Certain Gothic chiefs were Theodoric's trusted advisers, and in the conduct of his general policy, both abroad and at home, played an important part, none the less real for being unobtrusive.

The Goths retained their native laws, and the *Comites Gothorum* acted as their judges; they allowed the Romans to keep their own laws and institutions, while the rulers of the different provinces, in which the *Comites* exercised only military authority, acted as judges. In mixed cases the Gothic magistrate had to take a Roman colleague, and give sentence according to equity, so that finally the Roman law prevailed in such cases. Then, as the Goths were soldiers, it was natural that their legislation should be chiefly of a military nature. In civil and more especially in criminal law—which is necessarily territorial

—the Roman legal system prevailed. This explains why the *Edictum Theodorici*—thus designated as being the most important of all that ruler's decrees—was compiled from Roman laws, and obligatory even on the Goths, although it showed no trace of conformity with the Germanic customs, which cannot have been quite extinct among them.

Although the two legislations, Gothic and Roman, still remained in force, and although we may even believe that one of the conditions imposed by the Empire on Theodoric was precisely that of allowing Italians to retain their own laws, yet it is said that he refused at first to confer this privilege on any one who had fought for Odovacar. A new prince—so he was supposed to have said—is often compelled by necessity to inflict chastisement without being able to indulge in mercy. But Epiphanius, the Bishop of Pavia, persuaded him to adopt a milder course. Thereupon Theodoric not only renounced his first intention, but gave large sums of money to his adviser to relieve the people's sufferings. The fundamental idea of the new government certainly aimed at uniting and fusing Goths and Romans together. The former were to bear arms, while the latter were to furnish them with the means of subsistence. The administrative department was to be left to the Romans, with the obligation of yielding up a share of the land, of levying taxes and collecting the funds needed by the State. Accordingly the two nations lived long side by side without any fusion being effected between them. On the contrary, they remained in perpetual antagonism. It was impossible to fight against the laws of Nature.

Odovacar's faithful servant, Liberius, was entrusted with the administration of finance, and likewise with the task of arranging the new partition of the land—a most difficult operation, which he managed so skilfully that no

discontent was aroused by it. This was far from an easy feat, seeing that the lands once bestowed on Odovacar's soldiers had now to be apportioned to Goths alone, and the Goths were in the majority. But, as we have seen before, this mode of division had already become almost an established and normal usage in the Empire. Many of Odovacar's followers had perished or fled, others joined the Goths, and even the Goths were few in number contrasted with the population and extent of the country. For although the Italian population had been much reduced by war and massacre, the size of the estates now to be divided had thereby increased, somewhat to the benefit of the great landowners, who in other respects were the worst sufferers by the partition. But the burden of taxation was lighter under Theodoric's rule than under that of the Empire. More than once the Goth is said to have declared that it pained him to be forced to levy taxes from exhausted countries and impoverished contributors (Cassiodorus, iii. 40). Agricultural conditions steadily improved. Then, too, there were no wars for a long time, and the barbarian government, being less luxurious than the Roman, required less money. Hence, although subject to barbarians, Italy now enjoyed a period of tranquillity and peace.

The Cassiodori in the southern provinces were among the richest and most celebrated of the great landowners. Cassiodorus, the third of his name, likewise possessed numerous herds of horses, and made a gift of many animals to Theodoric, whom he served no less faithfully than he had formerly served Odovacar. He was the father of that Senator Cassiodorus, who became celebrated as the chief minister of the Ostrogoths. This Cassiodorus IV. was born at Squillace, in Calabria, about the year 480. He was a Patrician, a Consul, in virtue of

his rank as Quæstor, played the part of a prime minister, and was also *Magister officiorum* and Prætorian Prefect. The official letters he wrote while occupying these various posts form the most valuable record of the history of his times. Full of the old Roman spirit, he strove to keep it alive under the Gothic domination; he even inspired Theodoric's daughter Amalasuntha with the same ideas, for he was apparently charged with her education, and undoubtedly served her with his usual zeal when she succeeded to her father. Even after her decease he continued to work for the Gothic Government to the year 539, when he finally retired to his native place, and founding two monasteries, as we shall presently see, spent the rest of his life in religious and literary pursuits. He had always been devoted to study, even in the midst of his political labours, dedicating every leisure moment to literary toil. So after his final withdrawal from public life he worked harder than ever. Among other things, he wrote a history of the Goths, in which he sought to glorify their origin and destiny. All that remains to us is the abstract made of it by Jordanes, who tells that he wrote it from memory after a single reading of the work. Cassiodorus was certainly a man of very benevolent disposition. He aimed at Romanising the Goths, whom he sincerely loved and admired. He was a faithful and excellent official, and fluent and voluminous writer, but had no originality, no energy of character. He began his public career by penning a Panegyric on Theodoric, and invariably bowed to the will of his various masters. As a writer, he was always high-flown and rhetorical, drowning his ideas in a flood of conventional phrases and verbiage, and branching off into endless digressions, which often enough were totally irrelevant to the subject in hand. He might well be named a forerunner of the *literati* of the seventeenth century (*trecentisti*). Never-

theless he was a clever man, an untiring worker, and even the commonplace loquacity with which he reproduced and retailed the current ideas and feelings of his times enables us to see them as in a mirror. In fact the very impersonality and objectivity of his work enables him to give a more faithful picture of events than an original writer of higher talent and stronger individuality.

Since Theodoric in effect was only a high military and political officer sent by the Emperor to preside over the government of Italy, he left the old administration and magistrature intact both in Rome and in the provinces, and entrusted them exclusively to Romans. As before, the provinces were governed by *Judices* who administered justice, only now these were nominated by Theodoric. There was a Prætorian Prefect at Ravenna, a *Vicarius Urbis* in Rome. The Senate retained its old official splendour, but without its old authority. It no longer legislated either for the Goths or the Romans, and all real laws touching the latter emanated from Constantinople. But an hereditary senatorial nobility still existed, with certain fixed offices, to which special duties and rights appertained. Also, by the natural force of circumstances, another aristocracy was arising at Theodoric's Court, composed of the leading Gothic nobles in his train, who were in attendance on his person and advised him on important State affairs. Every city retained a municipal body, headed by the *Duumviri*, while in collaboration with them and almost with the status of royal officials were the *Defensor*, who presided over the administration, and the *Curator*, who watched over the finances. The chief duties of the Curia consisted in collecting the taxes.

Accordingly, Theodoric's monarchy was at the same time a continuation of the Imperial rule and a Germanic institution, formed, that is to say, of two different social bodies, which, although remaining separate, were recipro-

cally modified by neighbourhood and intercourse. But the scheme of fusing them together was a vain dream: one of the two was necessarily doomed to yield and succumb to the other. Theodoric founded no new institutions nor did he make any real innovation either in the legislation or administration. He considered that all could be arranged by the carefully regulated management of justice and finance. Meanwhile Goths remained excluded from the administrative department; they were not Roman citizens, nor could Theodoric himself endue them with that rank. They were foreigners constituting the army into which no Romans *qua* Romans were admitted; the latter, however, were entitled to an active share in ordinary political matters. Hence the nature of the monarchy remained essentially military and alien, in spite of Theodoric having been named Patrician and Consul and adopted as a son by the Emperor, who had sent him to Italy. It was altogether a dangerous state of affairs, replete with fictions, double meanings, and forms which, instead of corresponding with the genuine substance of things, were in direct contradiction with it. Hence it could not last for long. Nevertheless, the first period of the Goth's reign secured to the Italian people a few years of prosperity as well as peace.

According to Procopius, Theodoric "defended Italy, loved justice, was nominally a tyrant, but in real fact a king." Many instances are adduced of his justice and of his tolerance in religious matters—a tolerance that seems occasionally worthy of a true philosopher and almost of a modern mind. In certain letters, dictated by him to Cassiodorus, he says "that religious faith should be imposed upon none, since no one can be forced to believe against his will" (ii. 27). He not only treated Catholics with respect, but solemnly paid worship to the relics of St. Peter in Rome. Numerous edifices and

public works were brought to completion by him, more particularly at Ravenna, where the mark of his hand is still visible. For there we find the very beautiful church of St. Apollinare, with its glorious mosaics, the remains of his own palace, and his Roman mausoleum, roofed by one huge block of stone. He erected public buildings at Verona and in many other North Italian cities. He restored the aqueducts and walls of Rome; he drained a portion of the Pontine marshes; he promoted industry, commerce, and agriculture to such excellent effect that the price of corn was much reduced, and Italy began to be able to supply her own food, which had long ceased to be the case. Besides the great development of the fine arts promoted under his rule in the wonderful Italian and Byzantine works which are still to be admired in Ravenna, equal encouragement was also afforded to letters. If the writings of Cassiodorus, with all their undeniable value, have the sad defect of high-flown rhetorical diction, the works of Boethius, which we shall have occasion to mention hereafter, display the remarkable literary gifts that won for their author his well-deserved fame. It were, however, a mistake to attribute all this to Theodoric's personal influence and initiative; it was rather an indirect result of his rule. The peace he had ensured to Italy and the fact of his entrusting the internal administration to the practised hands of Roman officials greatly enhanced the prosperity of the country for a time. But it was not the birth of a new civilisation; it was merely the revival of ancient social order and civilisation which sent up fresh shoots amid the tumbled ruins of barbarism.

All these changes occurred so rapidly and generally that Theodoric was finally stirred to alarm. This was natural, since there was plainly increasing evidence of the great and impassable barriers interposed by diversity of race, language, custom, tradition, and religion between

the Goths and the Romans. An Arian himself and the chief of Arian barbarians, Theodoric had to govern an essentially Roman country of the Catholic faith. Although the general of a theoretically undivided Empire and the subordinate of a sovereign whom he professed to obey, he was the independent king of the Goths, who had raised him on their shields, and meant to retain that position. Now, therefore, in his own case, as before in that of Odovacar, so long as the Emperor was at strife with the Pope it was advisable for the Pope and the King to remain good friends and oppose joint resistance to the pretensions of the Byzantine Court. But the moment Pope and Emperor should come to an understanding Theodoric might find himself in a most critical position.

Even apart from such complication the political outlook was dangerous enough in itself, inasmuch as the Empire was full of barbarians. By pursuing the old Byzantine method of exciting one tribe against another the Emperor might easily renew, to Theodoric's detriment, all that he had done against Odovacar with Theodoric's aid. Accordingly the latter soon formed plans for strengthening the defences of his own realm, since it was clear that he could not rely safely on Constantinople, where no disposition was shown to recognise his authority in a definite way. Being already in possession of Rhoetia, which was always regarded as an integral part of Italy, he marched into Illyricum in 504, in order to seize Sirmium, where he had formerly held the office of Prætorian Prefect, and which was the first halting-place for barbarians entering Italy from the Danube region. Therefore it was a suitable position for defending that frontier of Italy against new invaders. But the Emperor was extremely vexed by this measure, inasmuch as it gave Theodoric possession of the very portion of Illyricum that belonged to the East. Accordingly, in 508, he made this a pretext

for sending a Byzantine fleet to effect a sudden descent on the Southern Italian coast, where his ships—in the words of a contemporary writer—“won a shameful victory of Romans over Romans.” It was another instance of the same perpetually contradictory state of affairs. Theodoric’s letters formally recognise the authority of the Emperor of the whole world, *totius orbis præsidium*. He pleads for recognition from the sovereign from whom he has learnt how to rule the Romans. His government can only be, only seeks to be, “a copy of the one united Empire, *unici exemplar Imperii!* How should one moulded by yourself desire to be separated from you? No division is possible between two Republics which have always been one body. The whole Roman kingdom must be animated by one will and one thought, *romani regni unum velle, una semper opinio sit*” (“*Variæ*,” i. 1).

Yet while Theodoric was dictating these epistles to his minister Cassiodorus he took a very different view of affairs in private converse with his Gothic counsellors and aimed at a very different, if not quite opposite policy. At that time he sought to rule over Italy as a thoroughly independent prince, and as this could not be approved by the Emperor the latter might at any moment decide to attack him or to hurl other barbarians against him. This fear inspired Theodoric with the idea of forming ties of kinship and alliance with the barbarians of Gaul, Spain, and Africa, thus constituting a species of confederation under his own protection—almost, in short, a barbarian Western Empire.

He married one of his sisters—Amalafrida—to Trasmund, the king of the Vandals; one of his daughters to Alaric II., the king of the Visigoths, related both to himself and his tribe, and who had helped him to vanquish Odovacar. They occupied Provence, a great part of Gaul and Spain, and Toulouse was their capital city. He

married another daughter to the heir of the Burgundian kingdom, King Gundobald's son. This was a vast realm, much harassed at that time by internal dissensions, by which the Franks were quick to profit. The latter, indeed, were rapidly beginning to build up a new barbarian state of greater power and extent than the others under the rule of Clovis, who, being a convert to Catholicism, enjoyed the powerful support of the Roman Church. Theodoric had been married to Clovis's sister Audeffleda, and she had borne him a daughter, Amalasuntha, who was his sole heir. It was the fact of having no male offspring that made him increasingly anxious to ensure the succession and stability of his kingdom.

Clovis was the most successful and progressive of all the barbarian princes, for by war, violence, and crime of every kind he had contrived to sweep away his enemies, kinsmen, and rivals. He defeated the Burgundians and subjected them to his rule; he turned against the Visigoths, conquered them also, and murdered their king. Afterwards he not only gained, as we have noted, the favour of the Pope, but likewise that of the Emperor Anastasius, who named him honorary Consul for the evident purpose of pitting him against Theodoric. Therefore the latter, after having vainly exerted every effort to prevent the Franks from advancing against the Visigoths, decided to make war on them directly he heard that they were besieging Arles and on the point of capturing that city. Accordingly two Ostrogoth armies crossed the Alps between 508 and 509, and the first of the two arrived in time to relieve Arles, which was holding out stubbornly. The united Frank and Burgundian forces then suffered so signal a defeat that Jordanes, whose figures are always exaggerated, reckoned their losses at 30,000 slain. Thus Theodoric became master

not only of Provence, which, being a part of Italy, he kept for himself, but also of those parts of Spain and Gaul which had been held by the Visigoths, and of which he now assumed the government in the name of his youthful grandson Amalaric, the child of King Alaric II. After the decease of Clovis (511) the strong Frankish kingdom in Central and Northern Gaul began to be torn by internecine dissensions, and so for some time ceased to threaten Italy.

Thereupon, as though he were really an Emperor, Theodoric decreed that Provence should be governed in the Roman style ; and also despatched to Gaul a Prætorian Prefect and a *Vicarius Urbis*. In writing to the latter he urged him to prove himself a governor of the kind "that a *Romanus Princeps* could fittingly send to his provinces" ("Variæ," iii. 16). Next, in addressing the inhabitants of the provinces, he said : "Since, by Divine assistance, ye have recovered your ancient freedom, clothe yourselves in Roman customs, *vestimini moribus togatis*, forsaking barbarism and cruelty ; obey the ancient laws, and be thus worthy subjects of ours" (iii. 17). We have another striking illustration of the Romanism he affected, in the inscription dedicated to him at Terracina, to commemorate the draining of a marsh. In this Theodoric is addressed as *victor ac triumphator semper Augustus, bono Reipublicæ natus, castos libertatis et propagator romani nominis*.¹ It is another repetition of the same curious phenomenon, of the same contradiction. While being and desiring to be a barbarian king, he sought to legalise and legitimise that position by assuming the style of a Roman prince, and new Emperor of the West—a pretence that Anastasius could not have felt disposed to tolerate on the part of a barbarian. Consequently the Ostrogoth king vainly tried to propitiate him. His

¹ "Corpus Inscr. Lat.," vol. x. 1, No. 6850.

failure in this was a greater source of anxiety than ever at this juncture, inasmuch as, having married his daughter Amalasantha to the barbarian prince Eutaric, it was a pressing necessity to win the Imperial approbation, for the purpose of assuring the legality of his son-in-law's succession to the throne. But, although Anastasius remained obdurate, Theodoric obtained all he wanted from the next Emperor, Justin, after successfully arranging a peace between the latter and Pope Hormisdas. Nevertheless, the final results of that treaty were very different, and far graver than might have been expected; for the religious question that was of such extraordinary importance in Italy, now assumed a totally different character, and became so much fiercer as to form, later on, one of the main causes of the overthrow of the Ostrogoth kingdom.

In spite of his Arian beliefs, Theodoric had been on good terms with the Pope for a considerable time, and sided with him in the religious conflict that had long raged between Rome and Constantinople. As we have already related, Pope Gelasius I. (492-496), a constant and resolute champion of the supremacy of the Roman Church, had condemned the "Henoticon," and denounced Acacius as a heretic, adding also, that if the Emperor had adopted those ideas, he too was a heretic. "As a Roman," the Pope said, "I should always be favourable to the Emperor; but tolerance towards heretics were more dangerous than the ravages of barbarians." Nor was there any reason why he should change his tone or attitude in favour of Theodoric, who, in fact, had no interest in opposing the Pontiff's views, since the dispute brought profit to himself. Nevertheless the Eastern Emperor who had despatched Theodoric to Italy, hoping—among other things—that he would prove better fitted than Odovacar to keep the Pope in check, was

entirely mistaken in him, and consequently increasingly resentful.

Gelasius was succeeded by Pope Anastasius II. (496-498), who was thus the Emperor's namesake, and a Roman of far gentler disposition than his predecessor. Theodoric profited by his mildness to send a friendly embassy to Constantinople, headed by Festus the Patrician, who did his best to arrange a politico-religious reconciliation, by giving the Emperor hopes of inducing the Pope to yield on the "Henoticon" question, and thus contrived to obtain for Theodoric the much-desired symbols of royalty. *Pace facta de presumptione regni*, as Anonymus Valesii said with regard to this affair. But Pope Anastasius died very soon, and a fiercely contested election ensued, during which Theodoric behaved most prudently. There were only two candidates. One was Laurentius, who being considered the more yielding and less opposed to the "Henoticon," was favoured by the Senators, and, naturally, still more by Festus, on account of the hopes the latter had inspired at Constantinople respecting the "Henoticon" question. The other candidate, Symmachus, on the contrary, was more decidedly Orthodox, and was therefore supported by the fervent Catholic party. The struggle between the two camps grew so furious that the public peace was endangered, and Theodoric was forced to act as arbiter. He proved his shrewdness by declaring that the choice must fall on the candidate having the majority of votes. Accordingly Symmachus was elected (498), and—as there seemed little fear of his being over-submissive to Constantinople—much to the Ostrogoth's satisfaction.

In the year 500 Theodoric made his State entry into Rome. The new Pope, with the Senate and the nobles, came to meet him outside the walls. He visited St. Peter's for the purpose of doing homage to the saint's

relics ; and announced that he would make every concession promised by the Emperors for the good of the Eternal City ; zealously promoted the restoration of ancient monuments ; caused public games to be given in the Circus ; and granted to the people an annual subsidy of 120,000 bushels of wheat. Meanwhile the adversaries of Symmachus had not calmed down, and now brought numerous accusations against him, including even a charge of adultery. Theodoric declared that he would take no part in the matter, and transferred the right of decision to a council that was called by the name of a Palmary Synod (*Synodus Palmaris*) (501), to which he sent the Bishop of Altinum as his representative, or Visitant. Opponents reminded him that the council should be convened by the Pope instead of the King, to which Theodoric replied that he had acted in full agreement with Symmachus. Next they protested against the intervention of the King's representative, or "Royal Visitant" as he was styled, inasmuch as no one could be authorised to judge the Head of the Church ; but to this Theodoric retorted that he merely asked the council to re-establish religious peace in the manner they deemed best. All, he added, would conform to the verdict they gave, while his own efforts would be limited to maintaining order and protecting the person of the Pontiff from every attack. The council concluded by recognising Symmachus without discussing his case, and Laurentius withdrew after various vain attempts at resistance. Thus the peace of the Church was finally re-established in the West ; but the strife with Constantinople was instantly renewed. Symmachus speedily assumed a very decided attitude ; and at a council that was convened in the year 502, he annulled two decrees of Odovacar (of 483) touching Papal elections, and prohibiting the alienation of Church property, declaring them illegal as emanating from a

layman, and unworthy of the sanction afterwards accorded them. Touching the "Henoticon," he wrote to the Emperor as follows : "In vain wouldst thou think to rebel against the power of St. Peter and escape judgment !" Nor could the Emperor make any effectual protest at the time, seeing that the people of Constantinople had now turned in favour of the Orthodox doctrine. Hence the Pope pursued his own course with unshaken perseverance. Among other projects, he was occupied in building new churches in Rome, gave the utmost care to the embellishment of St. Peter's, and began the construction of the Vatican. Thus, owing to his and Theodoric's efforts, the ancient capital of the Empire seemed to blossom into fresh life. At Constantinople, on the other hand, the great religious quarrel had produced riots and rebellions, which weakened the Emperor and afforded additional encouragement to the Pope. When Symmachus was succeeded by Hormisdas (514-523), this new Pontiff also struggled vigorously against the Emperor, who finally lost patience and dismissed the Papal ambassadors, saying that although he might tolerate pain and even injury, he could never stoop to take orders from Rome.

Matters being embittered to this extent, even Theodoric began to be oppressed with anxiety, for it would be certainly no benefit to him should the Emperor become too much incensed. It was precisely at this moment that the religious question underwent the radical change to which we have already alluded. Anastasius had been succeeded by Justin (518-527), an ignorant Dardanian peasant, but a valiant soldier, devoted to the Orthodox faith, and entirely under the influence of his nephew Justinian, who was a man of great talent, and no less strictly Orthodox than he was himself. Accordingly, the religious and political tendencies of the Empire now took so different a direction as to positively constitute the dawn of a new

era. The people of Constantinople became hotly zealous for the Catholic doctrine, heretics were persecuted, and, naturally, the Pope was moved to rejoicing. Theodoric therefore, alarmed by the new state of things in the East, and by the steady opposition to himself that he saw spreading in Italy, decided to assume the office of peacemaker between Pope and Emperor, hoping thus to win favour with both. His first efforts to this end succeeded easily enough ; but they subsequently produced unexpected results. In 519 the Pope sent ambassadors to Constantinople, who were received in state by the Emperor, Senate, and people. They were bearers of the *libellus*, that is, the previously arranged formula of the Empire's explicit submission to the Catholic doctrine, and this formula was immediately accepted. The "Henoticon"—that source of much strife—was solemnly condemned ; and anathema pronounced against Acacius. Thus at last Rome had triumphed, after fighting so long with unflinching vigour and without yielding a single point. It also appeared as though the Emperor were permanently reconciled not only with the Pope but with Theodoric as well. In fact, Prince Eutaric was named Consul, and adopted as a son, *per arma filius* ("Variæ," viii. 1), so the phrase ran. Nevertheless, all this soon turned to the hurt of Theodoric, who being an Arian, could not long remain on harmonious terms with a Pope and Emperor of the Orthodox creed, necessarily bound to combine against him sooner or later.

CHAPTER IV

END OF THEODORIC'S REIGN—THE REGENCY OF AMALASUNTHA

ABOUT the year 524 the Emperor Justin began to persecute the Arians, an event that involved Theodoric in serious difficulties, and especially because his son-in-law Eutarich was a fanatical and intolerant Arian. Accordingly he was forced to retaliate by persecuting the Catholics, and thus quickly at discord with the Pope and exposed to the public discontent. Just then, the people of Ravenna having burnt down the Synagogue, Theodoric forced them to rebuild it—a measure that increased the general ill-feeling against him. Also the Romans at large, and more particularly the Senators and great land-owners who had suffered most from the partition of the land, but now directed the administration and filled all the principal civil offices of the State, had begun, during the prosperous times of peace, to manifest a growing hatred of the Goths, together with a heightened confidence in their own powers. Naturally also this confidence was greatly augmented now that they could feel assured of the support of both Emperor and Pope. Thus Roman society and Roman culture gained ground very rapidly, and leaders of the cause were coming to a direct understanding with the Emperor. All this made Theodoric very wrathful, for he saw the structure he had so carefully

built up suddenly threatened with destruction. The alliance and fusion of Goths and Romans he had so earnestly desired now seemed a dream that was rapidly fading away. It was at this moment that he published the edict against the Romans, recorded by the Anonymus Valesii, *ut nullus eorum arma usque ad cultellum uteretur*. Little by little he seemed to lose every vestige of sympathy with the Roman world, and to be again the ferocious barbarian of former days, who had murdered Odovacar with his own hand in the banqueting-hall of Ravenna.

The Romans, however, were not all of the same mind, for some of them, even in the higher ranks of society, remained blindly devoted to the Goths, and—like renegades in general—were intolerant and vindictive. The leader of this party was the Referendary Cyprian, afterwards Count of the Sacred Largesses and Master of the Offices, and who had not only fought in the service of the Goths, but had allowed his own sons to be trained to arms by them and taught to speak their tongue. This was the man who suddenly accused the Patrician Albinus of having secretly written to the Emperor for the purpose of weaving a plot against Theodoric. Albinus positively asserted his innocence of all treasonable attempts; and most probably the matter would have rested there had not the growing agitation among the Romans and the suspicions hotly smouldering in Theodoric's mind been suddenly fanned to flame by the unexpected and voluntary intervention of a personage of great weight and repute.

This was the Senator Boethius, of the illustrious Anician line, who had been the friend of Theodoric, and had eulogised him in the Senate. In 510 he had been named Consul, and, as a most exceptional honour, the same dignity was conferred upon both his sons at the same moment in 522. He was a zealous student of the

ancient philosophers, more especially of Aristotle, on whose Logic he wrote a commentary ; and also of Plato and the Neo-Platonics. He had translated mathematical and astrological treatises from the Greek ; he was the author of philosophical and even theological works, and is described by Cassiodorus as an encyclopædic man. "Men had recourse to him," he says, "for the construction of a water clock, and for that of a solar clock (Metz) for the king of the Burgundians ; likewise as to the "selection of a good player on the cithara, to be sent to King Clovis ; furthermore he was required to test by scientific means the value of the coin in which the soldiers were paid." He was a Christian, an admirer of the old Roman spirit, and could be stirred to enthusiasm by a Stoic or Neo-Platonic sentiment. The impulsiveness of his nature was clearly proved by the manner in which he rushed into the perilous discussion as to Albinus's guilt ; for he openly asserted the latter's innocence, declared that Cyprian had falsely accused him, and added that Albinus's opinions were shared by the whole Senate. No plot, he continued, had been hatched, and if there had been one, no senator would have revealed it. Thereupon Cyprian produced false witnesses, who not only swore to the truth of the charge against Albinus, but accused Boethius of the same crime. Both, accordingly, were cast into prison.

The fate of Albinus is not recorded ; but Boethius was tried and condemned by the Senate. The form of his trial is unknown to us ; nor has it been precisely ascertained whether his sentence was pronounced by a committee or by the whole Senate. The latter supposition seems scarcely tenable, if we remember the constant distrust with which all the senators were regarded by Theodoric. Neither do we know the exact nature of the sentence passed on Boethius, who even had he

spoken too daringly against the King, had always frankly and boldly defended his colleagues. Most probably he was condemned by a committee to imprisonment, and later on Theodoric, blinded with rage, arbitrarily substituted for that penalty a cruel and most barbarous death.

It was during his prolonged confinement that Boethius composed the work that has immortalised his name : the "*Consolatio Philosophiæ*," that is really his confession and apology. "Of what am I accused?" he asks. "Of having loved Roman freedom, defended the dignity of the Senate." He declares that his accusers were corrupt, and complains of having been condemned without being previously interrogated by the very Senate whose cause he had championed. "The motive of the charge against me," he continued, "was the hatred I had roused in the fulfilment of my duty, by protesting against the injustice of which the Roman provincials were the victims. The unchastised greed of the barbarians made them hunger more and more every day for the lands of those provincials, hence they frequently desired their heads in order to gain possession of their property. Have I not many times defended and protected these unhappy men from the infinite calumnies of the barbarians who sought to devour them?"

This book, composed in a dungeon, is free from the pompous verbiage of Cassiodorus, is written in sound, pure Latin prose, with occasional interludes of verse, and forms a real hymn to virtue. Yet it was penned in the certain shadow of death, as Theodoric's resentment, already roused to the highest pitch, was naturally goaded to fury by the prisoner's boldness of speech. Boethius openly proclaimed himself the champion of justice and defender of the oppressed, in whose cause he shrank from no sacrifice. "Glory, power, and wealth," he continued,

"are vanities. Virtue alone has value, alone makes mankind really free. God is the supreme good to which the whole universe aspires, and which should also be the philosopher's fixed aim." One of the strangest characteristics of this book, which became enormously popular in the Middle Ages, and was translated into every tongue, is, that were one to read it without knowing its author, it would be difficult to decide whether it was the work of a Pagan or of a Christian. It certainly manifests a heroic courage that might be considered both Pagan and Christian at the same time. One cannot say that it contains anything that is absolutely opposed to Christianity, but it is decidedly surprising that a Christian preparing to meet his death should make no single allusion to Christ, Paradise, or Hell, nor even to the hope of a future life. It would seem to be the language of a Stoic, indeed at one time doubts were raised as to whether Boethius were truly a Christian and really the author of the religious works attributed to him. However, the great popularity of his "Consolations" in the Christian world of the Middle Ages rendered it difficult to entertain any doubt of his faith, and in these days historical criticism has entirely swept it away. There is an element in his nature that reminds us of the Italian Neo-Platonics of the fifteenth century, such as Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, in whom Paganism and Christianity seemed to be mingled and fused into a single doctrine. In those days conspirators invoked Brutus as they sharpened their swords to strike tyrants, while at the same time they implored the Madonna to guide their arm and ensure the success of the murderous thrust.

Theodoric finally ordered his captive's execution. A cord was bound tightly round Boethius's head, and twisted so cruelly as to almost force his eyes from their

sockets, and then a heavy blow with a mace released him from his torments (524).

But even this crime failed to satisfy Theodoric, who by this time had lost all self-control. Fearing lest Symmachus, the head of the Senate, also one of the Anician family, and father-in-law to Boethius, should seek to avenge his murdered kinsman, he had him promptly arrested and put to death without any trial. This serves to prove that Albinus and Boethius were not the only Roman patriots in the Senate, and tends to increase our belief that the members of that body would not have been unanimous in condemning one of their colleagues to death for political reasons.

Pope Hormisdas had now been succeeded by Pope John I. (523-526), and as he also rejoiced at the Emperor's persecution of the Arians, Theodoric's fury knew no bounds. Therefore, heedless of strong opposition to his purpose, he compelled the Pope to set out for Constantinople, insisting that he should defend the Arians' cause there and demand the restoration of their churches, threatening severe reprisals in case he refused. So, most unwillingly, the Pope voyaged to the East, where he was welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm. All that he asked for the good of the Catholic Church was readily granted him, but, as might have been expected, he neither obtained, nor cared to obtain anything in favour of the Arians. Therefore, when John returned to Italy the frantically enraged king promptly cast him into prison, where he died on the 25th of May, 526. Then, to secure his own safety, Theodoric brought pressure to bear on the Papal election, and supported the candidate who eventually mounted St. Peter's Chair as Pope Felix III. This roused a storm of ill-feeling against him from all sides. There were signs that the Empire and the Vandals would probably combine and seize the opportunity to

declare war against him at a very early date. But while he was collecting ships and men for his defence with fevered haste he suddenly fell ill and died. This decease, only ninety-seven days after that of Pope John, was regarded by many as a judgment from Heaven, and gave birth to various legends. Procopius relates that one day, when Theodoric was banqueting, a great fish's head was set before him, which glared threateningly at him, gnashed its teeth, and changed into the likeness of the murdered Symmachus. The terror-stricken monarch was seized with violent shiverings and took to his bed, but no amount of coverings could restore natural warmth, and a fierce attack of dysentery ended his life at the age of seventy-two, on the 30th of August, 526. Another tradition, told at a much later date in the "Dialogues" of Gregory the Great, recounts how a tax-collector, chancing to touch at the island of Lipari, met a hermit there who instantly exclaimed, "Theodoric is dead!" "How can that be?" replied the traveller. "I left him in good health a short while ago." "All the same," rejoined the hermit, "I have just seen him pass with his hands fettered, dragged along by Pope John and Symmachus, to be thrown down Vulcan's crater at Lipari." This legend is probably connected with the fact that, some time after the King's death, his body disappeared from the mausoleum where it lay, and no trace of it could be found. In 1854 there was reason to believe that some labourers who were digging at a short distance from the tomb had discovered Theodoric's skeleton buried in the ground. But owing to the dishonesty of the workmen it again vanished, together with the golden cuirass that had also been exhumed, and of which only a few fragments were recovered.

At the time of Theodoric's death his daughter Amalasuntha had recently lost her husband Eutharic, by whom

she had one son named Athalaric who was then about ten years of age. Therefore when Theodoric felt that his last moment was at hand, he summoned the Goth chieftains to his chamber and presented his grandson to them, charging them, Jordanes tells us, "to respect the boy as their king, to love the Roman Senate and people, and likewise to placate the Emperor and win his goodwill: "*Principemque orientalem placatum semperque propitium haberent post Deum.*" Necessarily the widowed Amalasuntha held sovereign rule as regent for her boy. She is said to have been a beautiful woman, and we know that she had received a Roman education, and could speak Latin and Greek as well as the Gothic tongue. Much force of character is also ascribed to her; but in reality she was unfitted to cope with the numerous and serious difficulties of her position. Not only did the Western Empire fall to utter decay in her time, but even the Ostrogoth kingdom was reduced to the verge of ruin.

First of all, too, her succession to the government was not sanctioned by the Emperor, nor was it in legal accordance with Gothic customs. To remedy this irregular state of things, both Goths and Romans were required to swear fealty to Athalaric, and he, in return, had to vow fidelity to them and to the Senate. "*Furat per quem juratis,*" so said Cassiodorus (viii. 3), who was now more powerful at Court than before, being Master of the Offices, Questor, and afterwards Prætorian Prefect, so that, as he said of himself, "*Erat solus ad universa sufficiens*" (ix. 25). Amalasuntha seemed disposed to follow a mild and conciliatory policy, without deviating too far from the course her father had adopted in the first years of his reign. She gave back the confiscated estates of Boethius and Symmachus to their respective families; although, by an odd contradiction, she still favoured the adverse party. Cyprian, for instance, the slanderous accuser of

Albinus and Boethius, retained all his dignities. Under Amalasuntha's rule Romans were promoted to high rank in the army, and Goths became members of the Senate.¹

The Ostrogoth's scheme of a great barbarian confederation under his own royal presidency had now vanished in smoke. Italy stood isolated, therefore the Eastern Empire had the game in its own hand, and hastened to profit by the situation. Meanwhile Amalasuntha had made Cassiodorus write to the Emperor in Athalaric's name to the following effect : " My grandsire was exalted by Honorius to the dignity of Consul ; my father was adopted by yourself *per arma filius*, a title that were even better fitted to a youth of my age " (viii. 1). But nothing could be obtained from Justin, who, on the contrary, was already preparing to make a descent on South Italy, so that Cassiodorus had to hurry off from Ravenna precisely at that time in order to call his people to arms for the defence of the coast. The Gepidæ were threatening the northern frontier, while in the interior there was serious discontent among the Goths, who were bitterly indignant because the youthful Athalaric was being educated in the Roman instead of the Gothic fashion, and trained to letters rather than to arms. In 527 Justin shared his Imperial power with his nephew Justinian, and at his death, four months afterwards (August 1, 527), the latter succeeded him on the throne. The new Emperor was a far better statesman than his uncle, and of remarkable intellect as well as ambition. He promptly recognised Athalaric as Theodoric's successor and Amalasuntha as regent, not from any affection towards either, but merely to secure their friendship while arranging an expedition against the Vandals. That war once brought to an end he could then plan his attack upon Italy. In the mean-

¹ Cassiodorus, viii. 6, 9, 10, 11 ; xi. 1.

time he rejoiced at the rising malcontent of the Goths, since it paved the way for his interference and would furnish him with some pretext for beginning hostilities. The Goth chieftains were already quarrelling with their Queen on the subject of her son's education. Theodoric, so they protested, had rightly declared that one who feared his teacher's whip could never dare to meet the foeman's sword. So one day when the child burst into tears because either his mother or his preceptor had slapped him in the face, the Goth lords raised such a clamour of indignation that Amalasuntha was obliged to pacify them by consigning her boy to the military chiefs, who gave him a soldierly training and taught him to love women, wine, and horses. In consequence of this sudden change of *régime*, the poor lad took to vicious ways, his health failed, alarming symptoms set in, and it was soon seen that his life was drawing to an end.

There was another grandson of Theodoric's in Italy named Theodahad, the son of Amalafrida by her first marriage with a Goth. Being left a widow, she had afterwards married Thrasamund, the king of the Vandals, but both were now dead. Theodahad had also received a Roman training, and having become a devoted student of Latin literature and Plato's philosophy, was little liked by the Goths. Yet, in accordance with the national custom, he was entitled, as Theodoric's sister's son, to succeed to the crown, in case of Athalaric's death—an event that was only too probable. Theodahad was ambitious, grasping, and had made himself detested by the Romans by his tyrannous deeds. Theodoric had given him vast estates in Tuscany, which, by stratagem and violence, he had enlarged to so great an extent as to make himself absolute lord of nearly the whole of that central region. Amalasuntha had been forced to put a stop to his unwarrantable acts of spoliation ; consequently Theodahad

was her determined foe, and had begun to plot against her at Constantinople.

Meanwhile the Goths' hatred towards their Queen assumed so threatening a character that she was compelled to banish to the frontiers three of the more powerful and turbulent chiefs. Even then she felt her position to be so hazardous that she also turned to Justinian for help, counting on his gratitude for the great services she had rendered him—as will be related farther on—in his war with the Vandals in 533. She contemplated seeking refuge at his Court, and continuing to rule Italy under his orders. Naturally, Justinian accepted the proposal, and hastened to prepare a splendid habitation for her at Durazzo (Dyrrachium), whither she sent ships loaded with 40,000 *aurei* from the royal treasury. But Amalasuntha was a very changeable woman, and having succeeded at that juncture in ridding herself of the exiled Goths, she recalled the treasure ships and suddenly renounced all idea of leaving Italy.

Thereupon Justinian, being puzzled by her behaviour, despatched three ambassadors to discover her real intentions (534). He had now conquered the Vandals, and was preparing for his Italian campaign. During the late war he had asked Amalasuntha to let him occupy the Sicilian fortress of Lilybæum (Marsala), and he now renewed the same request. This fortress had been given to Amalafrida as her dowry; and the Goths maintained that at her death it reverted by right to their nation. Justinian contended, on the other hand, that since he had overcome the Vandals the fortress belonged to him, and he demanded it with the greater persistence, knowing that its possession might be most useful to him when he began to make war upon Italy. Amalasuntha was quite disposed to give it up to him, but, fearing the anger of her people, delayed her decision.

On the 2nd of October, 534, Athalaric ceased to breathe, and Amalasuntha was in a new and most embarrassing position. She could not be an actual Queen, since that was forbidden by the Gothic laws; she could no longer be regent, now that her son was dead; neither could she treat with Justinian in her own name. She recognised the necessity of applying to Theodahad, and she asked him to assume the government of Italy in partnership with herself. Thus she hoped to satisfy him with a shadow of power, while he, on the contrary, intended to speedily grasp the whole substance of it. Meanwhile high-flown, wordy epistles were written in their name by Cassiodorus, to inform the Emperor of this new union: "Even as the human body hath two ears, two eyes, and two hands, so the kingdom of the Goths hath now two sovereigns." Also in other letters from the same pen, they eulogised each other to the Emperor and the Senate. It would seem that Justinian, thinking that little opposition was to be feared from two weak and inharmonious sovereigns, showed a disposition to recognise their accession without raising difficulties. Theodahad, however, already weary of playing a subordinate part, contrived to hold Amalasuntha captive in a palace on the Lake of Bolsena, and soon had her strangled there in her bath (535) by the kinsmen of the Goth chiefs she had caused to be murdered. Procopius asserts in his "*Anecdota*" that Amalasuntha was done to death at the instigation of the Empress Theodora, who dreaded her taking refuge at Constantinople, lest the Emperor should succumb to her charms. Theodahad, for his own part, professed his entire innocence of the crime; but no one believed him, especially when it was found that he had rewarded the assassins. Meanwhile it was Justinian who profited most by the foul deed. The moment Amalasuntha was imprisoned he protested against the outrage, declaring

that the Queen was under his protection. Then, on hearing of her murder, he assumed the part of an avenger of justice, and asserted his full right to begin the war against Theodahad and the Ostrogoths, according to his long-meditated plan.

CHAPTER V

JUSTINIAN AND BELISARIUS—THE VANDAL WAR— THE BEGINNING OF THE GOTH WAR

WE are now obliged to go back to an earlier period in order to give some account of the Emperor who played so preponderant a part in Italian affairs.

Justinian was born in Dardania in the year 482 or 483, educated and trained at Constantinople on the Greco-Roman system. In 521 he was appointed Consul by his uncle, the Emperor Justin. This event was celebrated by the most extravagant festivities, costing 280,000 gold pieces (*aurei*), and for which twenty lions, thirty panthers, and other savage beasts were used. This was the first exhibition of the splendid luxury which Justinian always affected, partly for his own pleasure, and partly as a useful means of enhancing his prestige and popularity. In 527 he was raised by his uncle to partnership in the Empire, and succeeded him on the throne shortly afterwards. He was undoubtedly possessed of great talents, he had a lofty conception of the Empire, and wished to restore its sway over the West. He showed an admirable power of intuition in the choice of the best instruments for carrying his designs into effect. This was proved by his selecting first Belisarius, and secondly Narses, who, at sixty years of age, was placed at the head of an army, for the first time in his life, and made a most excellent general. The same

fortunate acumen was displayed in fixing upon Tribonian and other learned men to compile the "*Corpus Juris*," and in choosing his architects for the erection of the wonderful church of St. Sophia. But he had no administrative faculty, for he squandered huge sums on public works, in the building of numerous fortresses, and in perpetual wars. Hence he was compelled to overburden the people with taxes, thus provoking much discontent, which, added to the continual lack of money, sometimes ruined his best-planned schemes. Also he was blindly enamoured of a beautiful but disastrous woman, of the Lady-Hamilton species, who was dissolute, cruel, and unboundedly arrogant. This was Theodora, the child of a keeper of wild beasts at the Amphitheatre. She is said to have become a public prostitute after her father's death, and to have appeared entirely naked on the stage. After various wanderings about the world, she then returned to Constantinople, and was taken to wife by Justinian, who, on ascending the throne, insisted on raising her to the position of Empress Regnant. From that moment, however, she kept her passions under control, led a decorous life, and proved herself a woman of great mental power and remarkable courage.

Our principal and most weighty authority concerning the whole of this period is Procopius, who accompanied Belisarius in all his campaigns, and has described them in an accurate and valuable Diary. Later on he produced another work, known either by the name of "*Storia Arcana*," or "*Anecdota*," displaying a hatred of Justinian and Theodora, of which there is no trace in his previous history. Apparently he felt able to write with a freer pen after those personages were dead, and therefore not only spoke far more plainly, but sometimes came to very exaggerated conclusions.

Justinian's chief fame in after generations is founded on

his legislative achievements. Various Commissioners of his own nomination, with Tribonian as their president, collected, arranged, and condensed all the sources of Roman law, also adding to it a Manual ("Institutiones") for younger students, and thus formed the "Corpus Juris" that is Justinian's chief title to glory. The first work the Commissioners produced was the Code ("Codex Constitutionem") a collection of Imperial rescripts in twelve books; but their most important work was that known as the "Digest" or "Pandects." This was a summary of all the works of the classic authorities in jurisprudence, setting forth their opinions upon "Leges" and "Senatus-consulta," and the summary occasionally included precious extracts from the original text. It was a truly stupendous work, and the fifty books into which it is divided give the essence of no less than two thousand volumes. The whole undertaking was begun and completed between the years 530 and 533. The ruling idea throughout the "Corpus Juris" is that of the absolute authority of the Emperor with a co-ordinating and centralising spirit, characteristic of a period that lacked—as plainly shown in its philosophy and theology—all productive originality of mind. Much blame attaches to Justinian for the excessive religious zeal that moved him to suppress the school of Greek philosophy at Athens, since although already on the wane, it still retained its ancient name and its store of glorious traditions.

In spite of his eminent qualities and the great works he achieved, Justinian's bad administration, lavish extravagance, and oppressive taxation soon produced a widespread disaffection. Likewise a heated religious controversy was being waged between the Monophysites, who enjoyed the protection of the Empress, and the Orthodox party, supported by the Emperor. All this presently led to a fierce revolt, which first broke out at

the Hippodrome, where the populace was already split into two camps, *i.e.*, that of the Blues, favouring the Monophysites, and the Greens, favouring the Orthodox believers. The same factions were then dividing and upsetting all the principal cities of the Empire; while in Constantinople their riots had become positively formidable. The Emperor was publicly insulted at the Hippodrome in indecently violent terms, particularly by the Blues, who charged him with partiality to the Greens, vituperating him as a thief, a traitor, and a fool. By way of asserting his impartiality, he had a few criminals of either faction put to death, but this only stirred both to join against him. The revolution that ensued was named the *Nika* (victory) from the password adopted by the temporarily united parties. During the revolt a great fire broke out, which raged for five days and caused enormous destruction. As the mob also proclaimed a new Emperor, Justinian believed farther resistance impossible, and was on the point of forsaking Constantinople and his throne. Theodora, however, displayed the virile strength of her character. "Rather die at once and for all," she exclaimed to her spouse; "to drag on existence as a fugitive prince is not life. Fly, if thou wilt; I refuse to live if stripped of the purple!" Then the youthful Belisarius was summoned to quell the revolt, and conducted operations so vigorously that, so it was said, 35,000 persons were put to the sword. Hypatius, the new Emperor chosen by the rebels, was also killed, and Justinian safely replaced on his throne (532), thanks to Theodora and Belisarius. The Byzantine Empire was a curious medley, not only of Greeks and Romans, but of many incongruous nationalities, such as Bulgarians, Slaves, Turks, Finns, Armenians, Persians, Egyptians, and even Moors. But all these peoples, of different races, customs, creeds, and tongues, with no bond of

nationality between them, were all bound together by the grip of Roman law and discipline. This remarkable fact is further emphasised by the prolonged duration of the Eastern Empire, which survived to the middle of the fifteenth century, while so many other States had crumbled to ruin. As the head of the government and of the Church, the Eastern Emperor had the complete disposal of a centralised and powerful bureaucracy, of a keen-witted diplomatic body, and of a valiant army that, during Justinian's reign, was said to amount to 150,000 men. This host was chiefly composed of Thracian, Tauridian, and Wallachian mountaineers, and although it was not invariably equal to its fame, often gave splendid proofs of bravery, and boasted a series of commanders of truly exceptional merit. It was the custom with all these generals, as with Belisarius, who was certainly one of the greatest of them, to have a special bodyguard, consisting of several thousand picked warriors, who were in their private service and pay. The navy, which was manned by natives of Asia Minor, Thrace, and Greece, likewise maintained its honourable reputation for a long period.

Justinian acquired great historical importance through the firmness of his endeavours to revive the ancient splendour and ancient unity of the Empire, by initiating a strong reaction of Romanism *versus* Teutonism. This reaction was triumphant in fact for some time, until the failure of trade and industry, the disaffection produced by exorbitant taxation and fiscal oppression, together with the jealousy and corruption of the Court, which continually fostered discord among the leaders of the army, ruined the work that had made so glorious a beginning and had been likewise so favoured by fortune. Belisarius was the chief instrument of this Imperial enterprise. Like Justin and Justinian, he was born in Dardania (505), and, joining the army at a very early age, soon gave

proofs of signal valour in the war against Persia (530), when, with only 25,000 men, he routed 40,000 foes. On the conclusion of peace he returned to Constantinople, and, as we have seen, in time to quell the revolution of 532. He was already married to Antonina, a woman much older than himself, and of much the same stamp as the Empress Theodora. She, too, was the child of Circus folk, had twice been a mother before becoming the wife of Belisarius, was dissolute, energetic, intriguing. She accompanied her husband on all his campaigns, and exercised a great influence over him that was often most pernicious to his interests.

Justinian's cherished aim was the reconquest of Italy by the Empire; but in order to succeed in this it was necessary to secure his rear by overthrowing the Vandals and resuming possession of Africa. The internecine disorders and consequent weakness of the Vandal kingdom on that continent were about the same that we have seen occurring in Italy. In 523 Hilderic had succeeded to the throne. He had no aptitude for war, and had imbibed from his mother Eudoxia, the daughter of Valentinian III., a certain amount of sympathy for the Roman Orthodox Church. This provoked in the Vandals a new outburst of barbaric Asian fanaticism that led to a revolution, of which Theodoric's sister, Amalfrida, the widow of Thrasumund, Hilderic's predecessor, was the leading spirit. The rebellion was repressed, and Amalfrida was thrown into prison and held captive until Theodoric's death, when, being now defenceless, she was promptly killed. Therefore the deepest hatred was smouldering between the Ostrogoths and Vandals, and this proved advantageous to Justinian, who rightly hoped that the former would help him against the latter. But Hilderic's reign was brief, for the Vandals drove him from the throne, and chose in his stead the bellicose and anti-

Roman Gelimer (531). But Justinian profited even by this change, for he instantly declared war on the Vandals, under the pretext of defending Hilderic's just claims, as well as the latter's orthodox Roman opinions.

Accordingly a strongly equipped fleet finally sailed from Constantinople, with an army of 10,000 foot and 5,000 or 6,000 horse, chiefly composed of Thracians. This force was commanded by Belisarius, accompanied by his wife and by the secretary Procopius, who had also been with him in Persia. The valiant Armenian captain, Joannes, was second in command to Belisarius. After a two months' voyage of storm and peril, they put into Catania, and, by the favour of the Ostrogoths, were allowed to disembark. They learnt then that the Vandals were so totally ignorant of their movements that Gelimer's brother had been sent to Sardinia on a military expedition. Accordingly the fleet received orders to put to sea, and Belisarius landed on the African coast at nine days' march from Carthage. He did not assume the attitude of a conqueror, but came, he said, as the deliverer of the Catholics and Romans, the clergy and lay proprietors, who were all equally oppressed by those foreign barbarians, the heretic Vandals. He most strictly commanded his soldiery to respect life and property, and, being favoured by the masses, was able to carry on the war with considerable success. The first battle was fought on the 13th of September, and he won the victory, although greatly outnumbered by the foe. On the 15th he entered Carthage, and took up his quarters in Gelimer's palace, inviting all his chief officers to share in a banquet that the Vandal king had ordered the previous day for himself and his friends, to celebrate his own expected triumph.

Gelimer then withdrew to Numidia, and being quickly joined there by his brother from Sardinia, delivered a

second battle, in which he was again defeated. After witnessing the rout of his forces and the loss of his brother, he took refuge with the Moors, and endured cruel hardships of every kind. Legend relates that he was reduced to such extremity as to implore Belisarius to send him a morsel of bread, having tasted none for long, together with a sponge to bathe his eyes, which were worn out by much weeping, and a lyre in order to soothe his harassed spirit with song. In March, 534, he finally surrendered, and was then received with great honour by Belisarius.

The most notable result of this war was that after all the terror and destruction they had wreaked on the Empire, the Vandals now disappeared altogether from history and were heard of no more. The rapidity of their overthrow must have been mainly due, as we have previously observed, to their badly constituted and oppressive government. Many of them were relegated to the borders of the Empire, in the direction of Persia; a considerable number were incorporated in Belisarius's army, and a few were actually admitted into the ranks of his own guards. Those who elected to remain in Africa had their property confiscated, were driven from their churches, thrown into prison, or reduced to slavery.

But the general's promptly achieved triumph was quickly followed by manifestations of jealousy and discord, which were always the gnawing worms at the heart of the Byzantine Court. After the apparently miraculous success that had crowned his three months' campaign, Belisarius was justly entitled to gratitude and honourable rewards, but, on the contrary, he was now cruelly wounded by the stings of malicious envy and slander. His calumniators had accused him to the Emperor of reckless ambition, asserting that he intended to play the king, having dared to take his seat on

Gelimer's throne. Accordingly Justinian became suspicious, and ordered him to forward all the prisoners to Constantinople without delay, whereupon Belisarius decided to go there in person to refute his calumniators' charges. His return to the city was a really triumphal entry, for he placed his captives, King Gelimer included, at the head of the procession, together with loads of most valuable spoil ; for the booty he brought included the precious objects belonging to the Temple of Jerusalem, which Titus had carried off to Rome, and Genseric, in his turn, from Rome to Africa. Justinian, conceiving the fear that these sacred things might bring misfortune upon him, as on the Romans and Vandals, restored them to their original habitation. Africa had been left to a governor's care, and now a host of officials were despatched there, who set to work to drain the life-blood of the land by grievous taxation.

The Emperor's thoughts now recurred to his old plans for the conquest of Italy. The murder of Amalafrida, by exciting animosity between the Ostrogoths and Vandals had already given him a pretext for one war. So now, the overthrow of the Vandals having made him master of Africa, he demanded the fortress of Lilybæum (Marsala) in Sicily more insistently than before ; while Amalasuntha, as we saw, hesitated about ceding it, dreading to farther offend thereby the national pride of the Goths who already disliked her so bitterly. However, when after Athalaric's death (534), Theodahad first held her captive and then caused her to be murdered (535), Justinian having promised to protect her, now declared his intention of avenging her death, and decided to make war.

Amalasuntha was assassinated in the spring, and by the summer a body of 3,000 or 4,000 men had already sailed from Constantinople to attack the Goths in Dal-

matia. Thus the latter were compelled to divide their forces, and it became easier to vanquish them in Italy, especially as Belisarius was already on his way thither with an army of 7,500 men, in addition to his own guards. This army, also chiefly composed of Thracian, Georgian, and Isaurian (Lycaonian) mountaineers, soon performed prodigies of valour.

Belisarius, its commander, told Procopius one day that his victories were mainly owed to the cavalry which he had reorganised on a new plan. He had noticed that the Goth cavalry were only armed with swords and javelins, and were chiefly employed in shielding the foot soldiers when the latter were struggling with the enemy at close quarters. He had therefore determined that the main strength of his army should consist of mounted archers, and trained his cavalry to this new mode of fighting. Nevertheless, in spite of his personal valour, infinite skill, and excellent strategy, this general could not have achieved the wonderful success he obtained with the small though very daring force at his disposal, without the help of the Romans. But with great shrewdness he had quickly won their goodwill, by announcing that he came to deliver them from the barbarian yoke, and from the Arian persecution, and also for the purpose of restoring Rome to her ancient grandeur.

Accordingly, as soon as he landed in Sicily, all gates were opened to him, and he easily traversed the length and breadth of the island without meeting any serious resistance, excepting at Palermo, which had fortified walls and was strongly garrisoned by Goths. Belisarius then ordered a few transport vessels to enter the port, and the soldiers, climbing to the mast-heads, shot storms of arrows down into the city to the huge surprise and consternation of the garrison which soon made surrender. In seven months Sicily was won back to the Empire. On hearing

of these events Theodahad was so terrified that he was ready to yield at once, actually offering to renounce his kingdom in return for a large pension. But no sooner was his proposal accepted than intelligence came of a reverse sustained by the Imperial force in Dalmatia, so he instantly changed his mind and refused to surrender the crown. Shortly after, towards the close of 535, the Imperials regained all the Dalmatian territory they had lost and occupied Salona, the Spalato of modern times. Justinian then refused to grant terms or make any bargain with Theodahad. Henceforth the whole decision was inexorably left to the hazard of war.

At this moment, however, Belisarius was unexpectedly called back to Africa, where the tyranny and incapacity of those charged with the government had provoked a formidable revolt led by a certain man named Stutza who seemed to intend forming an independent state and commanded a force of 8,000 rebels and about 1,000 Vandals. The life of the Imperial governor being seriously endangered, and the position growing daily more threatening, he hastened with Procopius to Sicily to consult Belisarius, who started for Africa without a moment's delay and marched into Carthage just in time to prevent its capture by the rebels. The news of his unexpected arrival inspired them with such mortal terror that they instantly retreated fifty miles from the city and were presently overtaken by Belisarius, who attacked and thoroughly routed them with his small force of 2,000 men. Then, on learning that another brave general, fitted to maintain settled order in those provinces, was already on the way from Constantinople, he returned to Sicily, and after establishing small garrisons at Syracuse and Palermo crossed over to the mainland.

There, too, he was enabled to advance swiftly, aided only by the popular favour, deserters from the Goths,

who throughout the whole of this campaign often joined his ranks. At Naples, however, both garrison and inhabitants showed their intention of making a stubborn resistance; and when Belisarius parleyed with the headmen of the people and tried to induce them to surrender, he found that both they and the Goths were determined to hold out to the last. Even the Jews, who had worked hard in provisioning the city, made a brave stand at one of the gates. Therefore this Roman or Italian population—whichever we like to call it—which many writers declared to be extinct, were a fighting people, and still had to be reckoned with on the battlefield. Theodahad meanwhile remained at a safe distance, and refused to send any of the urgently demanded reinforcements. As the legend runs, he sought to read the future by a peculiar mode of divination. He placed three batches of ten hogs in three different styes respectively marked as Goths, Romans, and Imperials. After an interval of ten days, he opened the three styes and found that all the "Goths," excepting two, were dead; that half of the "Romans" had perished, and the surviving five had shed all their bristles, but that all the "Imperials" were still alive. Hence he inferred that the Goths would be defeated and the Imperials would win the victory with the aid of the Romans, half of the latter losing their life, and the other half their property. This clearly shows that even legend records that the Romans took part in the war—a fact that frequently emerges even from the narrative of Procopius, although this Greek writer always tries to attenuate its importance by his slighting allusions to the Romans. At all events Naples held out so firmly that even Belisarius despaired of success and was about to raise the siege, when he learned that the city might be secretly entered through certain disused aqueducts. Accordingly, while he made a feint against

the walls on the opposite side to distract the enemy's attention, a body of 600 men forced a passage through the aqueducts, made a sudden rush to the city gates, killed the soldiers guarding them and threw them open to their comrades waiting outside. Thereupon the army poured in and began killing and plundering ; but Belisarius put a stop to the sack by threatening his men with the severest punishment. So the Imperial troops were masters of Naples and captured the 800 Goths who had defended its walls.

During this time Theodahad's cowardly behaviour had stirred every one in Rome to a frenzy of wrath. Accordingly the Goths of the Campagna deposed him and elected Witigis in his stead, who soon contrived to compass his death. The new king next divorced his wife in order to wed a daughter of Amalasuntha, in the vain hope of thus obtaining Justinian's friendship or, at least, his neutrality. But at this juncture the quarrel could be only decided by the sword : no alternative remained. The election of Witigis, which Cassiodorus, in his usual grandiose manner, proclaimed to all as the result of "heavenly grace and the will of the people freely expressed in the open country," proved by no means a fortunate choice. Witigis was a brave warrior, but neither a statesman nor even a skilled leader, and he was pitted against the greatest general of the age. First of all he withdrew from Rome, leaving a garrison of 4,000 men, and retreated on Ravenna in order to collect all his forces there.

He never reflected on the extraordinary moral effect that would be caused by the entry of Belisarius into the ancient capital of the world. That general would appear more than ever as the Empire's deliverer and would be the virtual master of Italy ! Witigis meanwhile was at Ravenna and endeavouring at all costs to arrange a peace

with the Franks whom Justinian had tried to stir against him in order to be thus enabled to attack the Goths from three different quarters at once, *i.e.*, from Gaul, Dalmatia, and Southern Italy. Hence Witigis, in order to be able to recall his troops from Gaul and thus reinforce his own army in Italy without having to meet simultaneous attacks on all sides, ceded Provence and Dauphiny to them and even stooped to pay a tribute of 2,000 pounds in gold. All this was a cruel humiliation to him, but the danger was pressing and there was no time to be lost.

With Belisarius, on the contrary, all was going well. Pope Silverius, in spite of his professed fidelity to Theodahad and Witigis, now invited him to come to Rome. Accordingly, leaving only 300 men to garrison Naples, the general advanced on Rome, passing through Cassino by the way, welcomed as usual by all the inhabitants of the region, and with his forces increased by desertions from the Gothic army. On the 9th or 10th of December, 536, he entered Rome, unopposed, by the Asinaria Gate while the Goths were pouring out of it by the Porta Flaminia. Thus, says Procopius, Rome was restored to the Empire after sixty years of barbarian rule. Belisarius established his quarters on the Pincian Hill and, after glancing at the city stretched beneath and which still possessed nearly all its ancient monuments, he immediately gave orders that it should be promptly provisioned and its defences repaired and strengthened. For the walls of Rome were over 260 years old, and having been erected by Aurelian and Probus, restored by Honorius 130 years later, and utterly neglected ever since, were now in a more or less ruinous state.

Meanwhile Witigis had been diligently collecting near Ravenna all available forces, and having succeeded in assembling an army of 150,000 men, now advanced upon Rome (537). On nearing the Salarian bridge (Ponte

Salario), the soldiers of the small garrison Belisarius had stationed there, were seized with such panic at the sight of the Gothic host, that the barbarians among them deserted to the foe, while others fled and dispersed. Before news came of the approach of Witigis's formidable army a thousand men had been sent to reinforce the little garrison, but on meeting the preponderating forces of the Goths were forced to retreat. Thereupon Belisarius, warned of the peril, rushed to their aid, and hurled himself into the *mêlée*. His steed having a star-shaped tuft of white hair on its head was named *Phalion* by the Greeks and *Balan* by the Goths. The moment the latter recognised the general by his horse, all their blows were aimed at him, but by some miracle he remained untouched. After being repulsed for a while by his furious onset, the Goths were reinforced and returned to the charge in such numbers that the Imperial troops had to effect a somewhat hurried retreat to the Salarian Gate. But it was closed against them, nor could they get it opened, for the Romans feared lest friends and foes should rush in together. Besides, darkness was falling, and it was rumoured that Belisarius was slain; accordingly, when he hurried forward with his men and, all begrimed and disfigured by his lengthy struggle, shouted to the guards to let him in, they failed to recognise their chief and refused to obey. It was a critical moment, but the dauntless general was equal to the emergency. Perceiving the imminence of the danger, with the Goths close on his heels, he took one of those swift and daring resolutions which remind us of Garibaldi, and, hastily addressing his men, re-formed them in compact order about him and charged his pursuers with such unexpected and irresistible fury, that they fled in dismay, believing that fresh troops had issued from the gate. Then, at last, Belisarius entered the city at the head of his soldiery and was welcomed with clamorous rejoicing.

CHAPTER VI

ROME BESIEGED BY THE GOTHS—THE BYZANTINES ENTER RAVENNA IN TRIUMPH.

Now began the longest siege of Rome known to history. It lasted from the beginning of March, 537, to the latter end of March, 538, *i.e.*, one year and nine days, during which time Belisarius gave countless proofs of his military genius and valour. He had started from Constantinople with an army of 7,500 men, exclusive of his own guards, but had suffered many losses by the way, and particularly during the sieges of Palermo and Naples. Also, he had been obliged to leave garrisons in the principal cities of Southern Italy ; and therefore—according to Procopius—had now to hold a city twelve miles in circumference with a force of only 5,000 men. To so small a body, resistance would have been impossible against 150,000 besiegers, but for the efficient co-operation of the Roman people. And the fact of this Roman co-operation is clearly proved by what Procopius says himself, although, as usual, he tries to conceal it. Undoubtedly the valiant general relied chiefly on his regular troops in all great emergencies, and for the defence of dangerous points ; but the Romans took a prominent part in guarding the walls. Fortunately these had been already repaired, although somewhat hurriedly, save the portion near the Flaminian Gate (now Porta del Popolo), known by the name of the

Crooked Wall (*Muro torto*). This was extremely solid, and was generally believed to be under the special protection of St. Peter ; therefore the foe never ventured to attack it.

The Goths completely surrounded the city, establishing their forces in seven encampments, facing the principal gates, and one of these divisions was planted across the Tiber, in the so-called Camp of Nero. Both besiegers and besieged employed numberless stratagems against the enemy. First of all Witigis cut the great aqueducts, thus reducing the Romans to the water supplied by their wells, and depriving them of the power required to work their corn mills. Thereupon Belisarius caused floating mills to be moored between the arches of the Ælian Bridge (now Ponte St. Angelo), and elsewhere on the Tiber, so that the wheels were turned by the force of the current. Then the Goths threw logs, beams, and even the carcasses of men and animals to obstruct the machinery, and make the water more poisonous. But this device was partly foiled by stretching chains across the river. The Goths, however, were not easily discouraged, and employed many other tricks of war. They invented wheeled towers drawn by oxen, to be dragged near enough to the walls for their soldiers to scale them. But when these towers were within range of Pincian Gate, Belisarius ordered his archers to aim at the oxen, and these being killed, the lumbering machines remained stranded in the open Campagna. At the same time the enemy tried to storm the ramparts at other points, and made a specially vigorous attack on the double wall flanking Porta Prænestina (now Porta Maggiore). But after successfully scaling the outer line, the Goths were massed with their engines of war in the space between this and the inner wall that had still to be won. Hearing what had happened, Belisarius rushed to the spot, and issuing from the gate took the foe in the

rear, while his bowmen on the wall fired into them point-blank. Then the Goths fled in disorder, abandoning all their towers, rams, and other engines, all of which were burnt by the Romans. Meanwhile the foe delivered another attack on the opposite bank of the Tiber, near Hadrian's tomb (now Castel St. Angelo), which in those days was still faced with white marble, and crowned with numerous statues, although already converted into a citadel. At first the Goths seemed about to carry it by storm, but the garrison, perceiving the danger, hurled down the statues on their assailants to such excellent effect as to speedily drive them off. Procopius declares that 30,000 Goths perished in this attack, and although the number may be exaggerated, at any rate it proves that their losses were severe. Belisarius wrote to Constantinople that it was truly miraculous for his small force of 5,000 men to have opposed so successful a resistance to a host numbering 150,000. Now, however, reinforcements must be sent without delay, otherwise a catastrophe might occur at any moment. So far the Romans had been friendly and helpful, but what might not happen if, wearied out by the continued hardships and dangers of the siege, and the enormous taxes exacted from them, they should change their minds and go over to the Goths?

In fact things were becoming very critical for Rome and its Byzantine defenders. Witigis sent orders to Ravenna that the Senators held as hostages there should be killed; he also seized Portus, which Belisarius had been forced to leave unprotected, being unable to spare the 300 men required to garrison its walls. But the loss of it was a serious matter, since Portus was the harbour whence it was easiest to ship supplies to Rome up the Tiber. Ostia was much less convenient for that purpose. Therefore, there began to be a scarcity of food in the city, and it was necessary to get rid of useless mouths. All able-bodied

citizens were divided into bands and employed to watch the walls, while a certain number were actually enrolled in the army. But these citizen bands were frequently moved from place to place, and they were continually mustered for the roll-call, likewise the keys of the city gates were occasionally changed, as necessary precautions against treachery, now that increased hardship produced signs of public discontent. Although the Romans in general had long adopted the Christian religion, nevertheless a few of them, bewildered by the calamities in which they were now plunged, secretly attempted to open the doors of the temple of Janus, to implore the aid of the Pagan god, who had always protected their forefathers. But the long-closed bronze doors had become so rusted that they could be barely thrust ajar.

Finally a reinforcement arrived of 1,600 horse, chiefly composed of Huns ; so this succour and the hope of soon receiving more, had such an encouraging effect on the besieged, that they began to make skirmishing sallies which were invariably successful, in spite of the superior strength of the foe. Accordingly they became so self-confident as to insist on marching out *en masse* to give battle to the Goths—a plan energetically opposed by Belisarius, on account of the small number of his regular forces. But the impatience of his soldiers could no longer be restrained, they were getting out of hand, and he was obliged to grant their prayer. Accordingly he ordered a general sortie from the Salarian and Pincian Gates ; while from the Aurelian Gate (Porta S. Pancrazio) a feigned attack was delivered in the direction of Nero's Camp, in order to prevent the large body of Goths stationed at that point from crossing the river to reinforce their comrades on the real field of battle. But as no reliance could be placed on the untrained volunteers of the working class who were anxious to join in the feint, they were ordered

to stand at arms without moving, for the purpose of impressing the foes by a great show of strength. In the real struggle, on the other side of the river, Belisarius meant to use cavalry alone, for he knew it to be his strongest and best-disciplined arm, and had carefully excluded all untrained citizens from its ranks. But at the last moment he was forced to yield to the insistence of the infantry, who panted for a share in the fight. This change of plan nearly ruined everything.

At the beginning of the battle the Roman advance was successful, while on the other side of the city the Goths in Trastevere began to retreat on perceiving how large a force of infantry was massed outside the Aurelian Gate. Then, however, the footmen who had been forbidden to move, disregarded orders and pressed forward; but instead of pursuing the foe, stayed to sack their deserted camp, thus giving the Goths time to re-form, and put the plundering Romans to flight. Also, on the other side of the city, when the tide of battle turned and the Byzantine cavalry were compelled to retreat before an overwhelming host of advancing Goths, the infantry, that should have served as their supports, broke and fled. Their captains, however, who had insisted on leading the infantry to battle, fortunately retrieved the honour of the force by fighting like heroes. With a band of picked men they checked the pursuit for a while, at the cost of their lives, and thus managed to cover the Romans' retreat.

By the time the Goths reached the edge of the moat they found the ramparts so thickly garnished with soldiery that they quickly withdrew. So the day was saved, but the grave danger incurred proved that Belisarius had been justified in trying to avoid a pitched battle with such an overwhelmingly superior foe. Accordingly he returned to the old system of frequent skirmishes, and these again proved successful, and often assumed heroic proportions.

Meanwhile fresh supplies of provisions were pouring into Rome from Ostia. The Goths could not intercept them, for, the circuit of the walls being so extensive, it was easy for the Romans to distract the enemy's attention by a skirmish at this or that point, while stores were coming in at some distant gate.

In June, 537, the third month of the siege, and the second year of the war, intelligence was received that a band of one hundred men from Constantinople had reached Terracina with the money required for the soldiers' pay. This was a matter of the highest importance, so, in order to cover the entry of this succour, Belisarius ordered two simultaneous sorties to be made, which were converted into very vigorous engagements. The Goths were easily worsted in the attack that took place beyond the Tiber, near the Neronian Camp. But outside the Pincian Gate there was a very hard struggle, and the guards of Belisarius showed their dauntless bravery and dash in episodes of a truly Homeric kind. There was a Thracian captain who continued to fight with a javelin through his head; while another was equally heedless of an arrow that pierced him between the nose and eye. The first of these heroes died of his wound, but the second recovered after the arrow had been cut out. The leader of the fight across the river succumbed to the numerous injuries he had received. All these details are gleaned from Procopius, who adds that no less than seventy-seven actions had already been fought by this third month of the siege.

Witigis now adopted a new device by planting a camp of 7,000 men three miles outside the walls of Rome, where two aqueducts crossed and recrossed each other, thus creating a fortified position well adapted to impede the passage of supplies into the city. It is certain that the besieged were now cruelly pressed by famine, and in

their despair the Romans once more insisted on sallying forth to conquer or die. But Belisarius again opposed a decided refusal, and tried to calm the citizens by assuring them that stores of provisions and fresh reinforcements would speedily come ; in fact he despatched Procopius to Naples to discover what succour had arrived there. This proved to consist of 500 soldiers with loads of provisions, so the secretary instantly sent all off to Rome, together with some troops already in Campania.

But although Procopius's mission did good service to the beleaguered city, it prevented him from continuing the valuable work that has hitherto supplied us with the graphic details of what he had seen with his own eyes. Accordingly we have scanty information as to the doings of Antonina, the wife of Belisarius, who now quitted Naples in order to rejoin her husband in Rome. It appears that one of her plans was to forward the intrigues of the Empress Theodora, who was bent on having Pope Silverius deposed and Vigilius elected in his stead. The latter had long aspired to the Papal crown, and woven many fruitless plots to that end. At Constantinople, however, he had gained Theodora's goodwill by leading her to hope that he would favour Monophysitism. Therefore, on arriving in Rome with a missive from the Empress, he was warmly received by Antonina, who did her utmost to forward his designs. Consequently Belisarius accused the Pope of intending to betray the city to the Goths, whereupon Silverius was deposed. He was succeeded by Vigilius (537), who pursued as before an ambiguous and changeable course, and began by neglecting to fulfil his promises to the Empress. The arbitrary deposition of Silverius, who died in exile on the island of Palmarola, near Pontus (June 21, 538), and the no less arbitrary election of Vigilius sowed the first seed of discord between

Belisarius and the Roman Church that afterwards served to undermine the Byzantine rule in Italy.

Meanwhile fresh reinforcements were arriving. Three hundred horsemen had already entered Rome ; 3,000 Isaurians had received orders to proceed from Naples to Ostia ; and 2,300 men, led by Joannes and other commanders, were escorting a convoy of provision waggons to the city. Belisarius then made various successful sorties from the Pincian and Flaminian Gates in order to cover the passage of troops and stores. The Goths, being wearied out by their prolonged and fruitless struggle, now offered terms of peace. So they addressed Belisarius as follows : " Let us make an end of this war, which is beneficial to none and injurious to all. Why should you fight against us, seeing that we came to Italy not of our own will, but by order of the Emperor Zeno ? He it was who sent Theodoric, our chief, to vanquish the tyrant Odovacar, and take lawful possession of the land in his name. We respected the laws, institutions, and religion of Rome. Theodoric and his successors made no new laws. We left all civil offices in the hands of the Romans, who had even the Consulship. Therefore, if we have observed all the terms and commands of the Emperor who sent us here, why do you make war upon us ? " So they requested that the Byzantines should withdraw from Italy, adding that they were free to carry off all the plunder they had seized down to that date. But Belisarius replied that Theodoric had been sent to chastise Odovacar and restore the Imperial authority, but not to make himself the king of Italy. What advantage could it be to the Emperor to replace one tyrant by another ? We will never surrender a country that belongs to the Empire.

The Goths offered next to relinquish Sicily, Naples,

and Campania, and likewise pay an annual tribute to the Emperor ; but all in vain. Finally they proposed a three months' truce in order to have time to negotiate terms with Constantinople. To this Belisarius promptly agreed, and profited by the armistice to re-provision the city, bring in fresh troops, strengthen the walls, and carry on all the operations he chose. And although these were neither legal nor justifiable operations in time of truce, Witigis remained silent. But he made loud though useless protest, when, on withdrawing his garrisons from Portus, Albano, and Civitavecchia, he found that Belisarius immediately occupied those places. The latter also despatched his trusted Captain Joannes to the Abruzzi with a force of 2,000 men, and orders to remain quietly in the mountains during the truce ; but the moment it should be broken, he was to pounce upon all the Goths in the Picenian region, carry them off into bondage, sack and confiscate their property, and share the spoil with his soldiers. In fact, when the Goths, tired of passively watching the unjust advantage Belisarius was taking of the truce, attempted to enter Rome by surprise, not only were they repulsed, but Joannes was ordered to pillage the territory of Picenum. After ravaging the land there, the captain advanced against Rimini and captured it easily, the garrison having been withdrawn to Ravenna. He then marched towards the latter city, since by taking that route on his return he could threaten the rear of the Goths investing Rome. Now, however, the latter were thoroughly dismayed, and at the end of the three months' truce they raised the siege, on the 12th of March, 538, exactly 374 days from the date of its commencement, and, having burnt all their camps, began to retreat. Owing to the scantiness of his cavalry, Belisarius was unable to pursue them and engage a decisive battle ; but

he attacked them while they were crossing the Tiber, and caused such panic in their ranks that numbers were drowned in the river.

Notwithstanding his many successes, there is one question that naturally occurs to us : Why Belisarius, who, in a three months' campaign, had almost exterminated the Vandals, should have failed to overcome the Goths, who after a three years' struggle were still in open resistance? He had reached Rome, but there his advance was checked, and he only entered Ravenna two years later. This seems all the more extraordinary when one remembers that the inhabitants were all on his side, and that deserters from the Goths were continually flocking to his standard. The truth was that Belisarius had landed in Italy with a very small army, which by the time it reached Rome was reduced to a minimum by the necessity of leaving garrisons in Sicily and the southern cities of the mainland. Therefore he had to face a formidable Gothic host with a very inadequate force. Later on, it is true, various contingents came to his aid from Constantinople ; but by that time Court intrigues had perverted Justinian's judgment to such an extent that he invested the new captains he despatched to Italy with almost equal authority to that of Belisarius—a measure that disastrously retarded the course of a war that was wasting the country and oppressing its inhabitants with taxes. In fact the general discontent was continually swelling, and was additionally exasperated by the present attitude of Belisarius towards the head of the Roman Church.

Meanwhile warfare was still going on along the Flaminian Way leading from Rome to Fano and Rimini. The cities to the left of this route—Orvieto, Chiusi, Todi, and Urbino—all situated more or less in the hills, were held by the Goths ; but those to the right, Osimo excepted, were occupied by the Byzantines. Nevertheless

the latter could make no advance until they could capture the towns in the enemies' hands without exposing their rear to attack. Accordingly Belisarius, fearing lest Joannes' force of only 2,000 men might get into difficulties between Rimini and Ravenna, sent another thousand to his aid, with orders first to detach a small force to garrison Rimini, and then march back with the main body to join his army. Joannes' expedition had apparently succeeded, since the new contingent was able to advance unmolested. However, on reaching the Furlo Pass, otherwise called Pietra Pertusa, where the road is tunnelled through the rocks and forms a natural mountain fortress, they had a skirmish with the Goths, who, on being worsted, promptly made submission to the Byzantines, and followed in their ranks. But when the troops entered Rimini Joannes refused to obey the instructions they brought from Rome, so they were obliged to go back without him, whereat Belisarius was greatly enraged.

Meanwhile fresh contingents had landed at the seaport of Picenum (Ancona), led by Narses, whom the Emperor had furnished with full powers as commander-in-chief, not only to co-operate with Belisarius, but, in consequence of the jealousy the latter seemed to have excited at Court, likewise to hamper his movements. Narses, the new leader, born in 478, was already sixty years of age, was a very clever and most ambitious man, and had climbed, step by step, to the highest civil offices of the State. But, strange as it may seem, this man, sent by the Emperor to Italy with the rank of a general, had never before served in the army! For even when he had so efficaciously aided Belisarius to quell the revolt at the Hippodrome, he had only accomplished the task by bribing the leaders of both factions. Therefore, to give the command of an army to a civilian of this kind was

totally without precedent. Nevertheless, as Narses soon proved to be one of the first captains of the age his nomination did the greatest honour to the penetrating and indeed almost prophetic knowledge of mankind that Justinian had already shown on other occasions as well. Only, from the moment Narses appeared in Italy, being aware that he possessed the full confidence of the Court, and knowing the rising jealousy with which Belisarius was regarded there, he not only adopted a tone of perfect equality with that general, but likewise behaved to him with unconcealed arrogance. This was speedily seen at the council of war held at Fermo in the course of the year (538). Joannes had sent messengers from Rimini urgently demanding relief, for although he had repulsed the first attacks of the Goths, the town was now strictly besieged by the whole of King Witigis' army, and he was reduced to the terrible straits which Belisarius had foreseen. Accordingly, the question discussed was whether to go to his aid, advancing upon Rimini by the Flaminian Way, and leaving Osimo and other fortified cities in the hands of the Goths, or to abandon him to his fate, as a merited punishment for the disobedience that had so gravely compromised the final result of the war. Belisarius was in favour of the latter course, but Narses strenuously opposed it. The capture of Osimo, he declared, might be deferred for a time ; meanwhile it was necessary to prevent the recently defeated Goths from recovering self-confidence by the seizure of Rimini and inflicting sore defeat and humiliation upon a Roman general and his troops. As to punishing Joannes for his disobedience, that, too, might be done later, without risking the honour and fortunes of the Empire by leaving Rimini unrelieved.

As these arguments carried a certain weight, Belisarius was obliged to yield, although greatly against his will.

Accordingly he sent a detachment of 1,000 men to keep watch over the garrison of Osimo, that comprised 4,000 Goths. Then, despatching troops to Rimini both by sea and by land, he advanced with horses, at the head of a flying column, in order to strike a decisive blow at the right moment. The main army meanwhile, in scattered formation, marched across country by various routes, taking care to light numerous fires wherever they encamped for the night, to give the enemy an exaggerated idea of their strength. In fact, when the Goths saw the Imperial galleys entering the harbour of Rimini on the one side, while on the other the whole plain seemed an enormous camp, with all the blazing watch-fires of the scattered troops, they feared to be completely surrounded, and hastily retreated on Ravenna. The garrison of Rimini was too worn out to give pursuit ; but the newly arrived Imperials pillaged their camps. Joannes, divining that his deliverance was owed to Narses, pointedly reserved all his gratitude for him, and gave no thanks to Belisarius. This gave birth to a discussion between the rival leaders, that, being fomented by the partisanship of other generals, finally brought the Empire to ruin.

This affair occurred at a most unfortunate moment. Witigis was in Ravenna with an army of 30,000 men ; Osimo, Orvieto, Urbino, and many other cities of Central Italy were held by the Goths. The Franks to the north were threatening to come to their assistance, while the small Imperial garrison at Milan was isolated in the midst of a region entirely occupied by the foe. Yet this was the moment that Narses chose for openly asserting his hostility to the commander-in-chief. At a council of war Belisarius suggested that the army should be split into two strong divisions, one to occupy Milan and all Liguria, the other to reduce Orvieto and the Central Italian cities, and when these operations were effected, it would then be

time to give battle to Witigis with the whole strength of the army. But Narses contended, on the other hand, that the province of Æmilia should likewise be occupied and Ravenna attacked, urging this view with great persistence. When Belisarius, losing patience, remarked that he alone was commander-in-chief, and showed him the commission received from Justinian, Narses replied that by the terms of that letter he was instructed to do whatsoever should be for the good of the Empire, and therefore the Empire was the only point to be considered. The end of the matter was that the army lacked all unity of command. Accordingly Belisarius decided to seize Urbino and afterwards Orvieto (538), and Narses marched with Joannes into the Æmilian province. Thereupon Witigis ordered his nephew to lay siege to Milan, while Theudibert, King of the Franks, sanctioned the descent into Italy of 10,000 of his Burgundian subjects, who, with the pretext of going to aid the Goths, had, so far, done nothing but ravage the land. The small garrison of Milan being reduced to extremity implored help from Belisarius, who despatched a force to their assistance ; but the surrounding country being occupied by Goths and Burgundians, these troops never reached the beleaguered city. And when Narses, finally yielding to the general prayer, forwarded the necessary reinforcements, it was too late to save Milan. The little garrison had been forced to capitulate, and although the victors had kept their promise of sparing the soldiers' lives, they put no less than 300,000 citizens to the sword—if Procopius may be believed. The women were given in bondage to the Burgundians, in return for the assistance rendered in besieging the town, which was now razed to the ground. Thus, all Liguria was in the hands of the Goths. Nevertheless Belisarius reaped some advantage from this disaster, for in reporting it to Constantinople, he was able to prove that it had been an

unavoidable result of the divided command, and thus Justinian was at last persuaded to restore him to his former supremacy over the army, and recalled Narses to the East (539).

This change was greatly needed, inasmuch as the difficulties of the war were constantly on the increase. Witigis had contrived to induce Persia to threaten Justinian, who was therefore inclined to bring the Italian campaign to a peaceful end ; but Belisarius overruled the Emperor's wish, being as usual full of confidence in his success. Meanwhile the general undertook the siege of Osimo, caused Fiesole to be invested by two of his captains, and also sent a small force to occupy Tortona, in Northern Italy. It was at this moment that the Franks poured down from the Alps under the command of King Theudibert and, according to Procopius, they numbered 100,000 men. Although professing to come as the allies of the Goths, on entering Pavia they sacked that town, slaughtered men, women, and children, and routed the Gothic soldiery, who retreated on Ravenna. They next attacked the Imperial troops, who, being taken by surprise, also retreated for the purpose of joining with Belisarius, who was still besieging the strong walls of Osimo. Fortunately the swarm of Franks was soon swept away ; for those invaders found no means of sustenance in the exhausted land, and being forced to drink the water of the river Pò, a plague of dysentery broke out among them, killing off great numbers, whereupon the rest fled back to their own country (539).

At this juncture Fiesole surrendered, so that the conquerors were able to join the besieging force before Osimo. When this town, although of great strategic importance and with an almost impregnable position, was driven by famine to open its gates, its valiant Goth defenders were so indignant at having received no help from Ravenna,

that they all deserted to the Imperialists under Belisarius. The general then began his march towards Ravenna, hoping to gain that city by peaceful means, seeing that it was impossible to take it by force unless he were provided with a fleet. But there was no chance of obtaining ships just then, for the Emperor, being terrified by Persia's threatening attitude and the powerful assistance promised to Witigis by the Franks, was bent on making peace in Italy. In fact the Franks had undertaken to bring a host of 500,000 men to aid the Goths, provided Witigis would give them half of his North Italian kingdom. But the latter preferred to share Italy with the Byzantines, rather than with such powerful, treacherous, and cruel barbarians as the Franks. Being skilled in diplomacy as well as in war, Belisarius carefully fomented the natural distrust of the Gothic sovereign by reminding him of the recent ravages the Franks had perpetrated in Italy while pretending to come to his help. Meanwhile he pressed the siege of Ravenna with increased vigour, and Goth deserters came flocking to his standard from all sides. Then, too, when food was growing scarce in the town, the warehouses containing the last stock of wheat were burnt down. Some said the fire was caused by a thunderbolt, but others attributed the destruction to the wife of King Witigis, who wickedly betrayed her husband at this critical moment (540).

Therefore, Belisarius turned a deaf ear to Justinian's proposal of making terms with Witigis, and gave out that no peace could be arranged until Ravenna had surrendered. Accordingly, the Goths being already reduced to extremities by famine, naturally believed that the Emperor had sought to delude them by false suggestions of making peace, and, after holding a council, sent ambassadors to Belisarius bearing a strange proposal to the effect that they were ready to recognise him as the Emperor of the

West and swear fealty to him as their leader and lord. Belisarius, however, had no intention of betraying the flag for which he had always fought, so he gained time by spinning out the negotiations, knowing that hunger would soon force the Goths to yield without terms. Before long, in fact, the gates were opened to him on the sole condition of respecting the lives and property of the inhabitants, while, as to the question of becoming Emperor, that could be discussed later with Witigis. So, in the spring of 540, Belisarius entered Ravenna at the head of his army. The Goths, who had yielded their city without giving battle, and even proposed to renounce their individuality as a nation, now looked on with deep humiliation as the Byzantine army, much inferior in number to their own, swept in triumph through the streets of their city. But the women of Ravenna were trembling with rage, for they had been always told that the Byzantines were in overwhelming numbers and of great physical strength, while they now beheld a poor array of swarthy, undersized men, of very mean aspect compared with that of the tall, robust, fair-skinned barbarians. This made them so furious, says Procopius, that they spat in their husbands' faces, and cursed them for cowards.

According to his usual custom, Belisarius faithfully adhered to the terms he had sworn. By threats of condign punishment he forced his soldiery to respect the lives and property of the citizens. But he seized the royal treasure and kept Witigis and his nobles in custody, while all the rest of the Goths were set at liberty and allowed to go anywhere they chose. Ravenna now belonged to the Byzantines, who retained it down to 752, when it was taken from them by the Longobards, who soon after forfeited it to the Franks. Treviso, Cesena, and other cities also yielded soon to the Byzantines; but Verona and Pavia held out, and in the latter city the

Goths offered the crown to Uraias, a valiant leader and a nephew of King Witigis. But he refused the honour from unwillingness to usurp the throne of his captive uncle, and advised the warriors to offer it to Hildibad, who was then defending Verona, and was related to the King of the Visigoths. Hildibad promised to assume the crown, but only on condition that first another effort should be made to induce Belisarius to become Emperor of the West, and declared his own readiness to swear allegiance to him. But the attempt proved fruitless ; for Belisarius was already preparing to sail for Constantinople, where his presence was urgently demanded, and where in due course he appeared bearing the treasures of the Goths and accompanied by Witigis and his lords, who, being his prisoners, were bound to grace his triumph.

With the conquest of Ravenna and the general's triumphal procession at Constantinople, the first period of the Byzantine war in Italy is brought to a close. Now was the time when Belisarius should have received signal honours and rewards, but, on the contrary, he was speedily involved in the troubles and adversities which were to poison the remainder of his life. Notwithstanding the many elements of strength still surviving in the Byzantine world, it was so corrupted by envy, malice, and greed, that all real and assured progress had ceased to be possible. We shall shortly see what a flood of ingratitude and bitterness was poured upon the man who had so nobly proved his loyalty to the Empire and its sovereign, by the splendid successes he had achieved in Persia, Africa, and Italy, and who, in spite of the black ingratitude with which he had been requited, was again to render them fresh service.

CHAPTER VII

THE DESOLATE STATE OF ITALY—FOUNDATION OF THE ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT

THE still unfinished war in Italy had already lasted five years and had ravaged and exhausted the country to a positively unimaginable degree—in fact, to such sore extremity that there was no possible hope of its revival for a very long time. Procopius describes the state of things produced there by death, drought, and famine during the year 538, and more particularly in Tuscany, Liguria, and the Æmilian province. For two years, he says, the land had been left totally uncultivated, and even the poor crops of sickly grain which sprouted spontaneously were often left to rot on the ground. The inhabitants of Tuscany had fled to the mountains where they lived upon acorns ; the dwellers in Æmilia migrated into the Picenian territory, hoping to find sustenance on the Adriatic coast. But so great a dearth reigned there that 50,000 peasants were said to have suffered death from starvation. The same writer describes from his own experience as an eye-witness the manner in which they died. Their skin turned yellow, he says, from the overflow of bile, and adhered to their bones like leather, their flesh being all wasted away. Then the yellow tint changed to deep red, later to black, their eyes glared like those of madmen, and thus these poor sufferers

died. Even crows and other birds of prey left their shrivelled carcases untouched. Also if the starving wretches chanced to find any food, they devoured it so greedily and in such great quantities, that it killed them, their digestive organs being already destroyed by exhaustion. Things arrived at such a point that men sometimes became cannibals. Procopius mentions the case of two women who, being left alone near Rimini, gave shelter to travellers and killed them in their sleep in order to devour their bodies. He declares that they had already disposed of seventeen victims in this manner, but the eighteenth escaped, and killed both the women instead. One saw poor wretches crawling about in the fields feeding on grass like goats, and often being too weak to uproot it, they perished of exhaustion, and were left unburied on the ground. Amid many instances of suffering and ferocity the same writer tells us a very piteous tale. When crossing the Apennines, on the way to Rimini, he saw a deserted infant lovingly fostered by a goat, who attended to its wants whenever it cried, and allowed no one to approach it, so that the child refused to take milk from some women of a neighbouring village. It seems that the mother, in flying for her life from Joannes' soldiery, had been separated from her child and could not find him again. Perhaps she had been killed or taken captive, but at any rate was heard of no more.

All the confusion, despair, and appalling misery caused by this war from the very first, grew worse and worse as it went on. In the midst of such sore and prolonged calamity it was no wonder that men's minds turned towards God, and that a new state of things, started some time before, should suddenly develop at an extraordinary rate. For monasticism now spread so rapidly throughout the Western Empire that it seemed to be almost an epidemic. St. Benedict had so thoroughly reformed the whole system

that he was regarded as the founder of a new one. He was a really extraordinary and spiritually-minded man, in whom genuine goodness was combined with a profound knowledge of human nature and of the tendencies of his age. He accomplished the transformation of monasticism by establishing in the Western monasteries an easier and more human form of the religious life which by the anchorites of the Thebais had been practised with an exaggerated austerity sometimes pushed to the verge of insanity, and too decidedly antagonistic to the temper of Italians to gain ground among them. St. Benedict's leading merits are clearly shown in the monastic Rule he drew up for his Order. For seven centuries, namely down to the times of St. Francis and St. Dominic, the monks of the Western world were almost exclusively Benedictines, and were spread over Europe from Poland to Portugal, from Great Britain to Calabria, all subject to the Head of the Order established at Monte Cassino, a cloister that was, as it were, the new Rome, new Jerusalem, and Mecca of all Christian believers. The life of St. Benedict and his disciples has been abundantly illustrated in Italian poetry, painting, and legend. The conventual buildings, the paintings, frescoes, and poems inspired by these gentle brethren at a time when the world was torn by fierce passions and bloody wars, still transmit to us of the present day the spirit of peace, faith, and charity, of serene and constant labour that, throughout the Middle Ages, rendered the Order a perennial fount of art, poetry, and civilisation.

The new Rule of St. Benedict, comprising seventy-three articles, was undoubtedly suited to the needs of the time, and while strictly maintaining discipline, avoided all excessive severity. The possessions of those who took the vows, and all that was afterwards bequeathed to them by their families, became the absolute property of the

community, in which all individual rights were merged. Idleness was forbidden as being hurtful to the soul (*otiositas inimica est animi*). So the Benedictines took an active share in agricultural work and in all the domestic labour of daily life. One remarkable and very practical clause of the Rule insists that no one should be allowed to become a monk without testing the reality of his vocation for the monastic life by a term of novitiate. St. Benedict recognised no distinction between rich and poor, peasants, slaves, Romans, Byzantines, or barbarians. According to his Rule all men were equal as in God's sight; and this serves to explain the extraordinary rapidity with which it spread through the world.

The life of this greatest of monks has been related to us by Gregory I., perhaps the greatest of the Popes, and who, according to some writers, came into the world on the day St. Benedict died (March 21, 543). Although his narrative is full of miraculous legends, it enables us to comprehend the true character of the saint. Benedict was born (480) in the Sabine Hills, at Norcia, twenty miles from Spoleto, and 2,000 feet above the sea. He came of a noble Roman stock, began his studies in Rome about four years after Odovacar had become lord of Italy. But he soon renounced the world, and withdrew to the mountains near the source of the Arno to lead a solitary and contemplative life. But his foster-mother, who had accompanied him to Rome, followed him even to this desert place, being subjugated by the lofty moral influence he exercised over all men. Before long the fame of his sanctity and of the miracles he had performed attracted such a throng of enthusiastic followers that in order to escape them he fled to Subiaco, where a few anchorites were the only inhabitants. Here he received the monastic robe from a friar named Romanus, and took up his abode in a cavern, where at fixed times the friendly

monk managed to supply him with food from the convent by letting down a rope from the summit of the rock to the mouth of the cave. But Romanus suddenly disappeared and was heard of no more. Then, first of all, a hermit came from a long distance to bring food to Benedict, and afterwards certain shepherds were miraculously inspired by the Lord to minister to his needs. Later on came a time of trial, for the saint, being a young man in the full vigour of life, was assailed by temptations of the flesh, and in order to conquer them threw himself stark-naked into a thicket of thorn-bushes and prickly plants, which lacerated his rebellious body. But the blood that ran from his wounds caused roses to grow on those thorns, so that seven centuries later St. Francis found them still blooming, and the traveller may see their flowers to this day.

Meanwhile the fame of the youthful saint was so widely spread that the brethren of Vicovaro, having just lost their abbot, prayed him to assume that dignity. But after overcoming his reluctance and inducing him to fill the offered post, they were speedily disgusted by the severe discipline he imposed, and conspired to get rid of him by poison. After a miraculous escape from this new danger, he indignantly withdrew to his former solitude. But such crowds were attracted by the fame of his virtues that between the years 500 and 520 twelve monasteries were established in the neighbourhood of Subiaco, with superiors selected by himself. He however remained secluded with a few disciples in a humble refuge near Subiaco (called the *Sacro Speco*) on the mountain above his old cave. In spite of his avoidance of publicity, the number of his adherents and the jealousy of the regular clergy left him no peace. A certain ecclesiastic actually sent women of evil life to tempt him to sin, whereat St. Benedict was so disgusted that he fled to Monte Cassino. Finding a

42. heathen altar there, with a statue of Apollo, he promptly ordered them to be demolished, and founding the chief convent of his Order on the same spot, abode there for fourteen years (529-543). Totila, king of the Goths, came thither to see him in 425, and cast himself at his feet, and the saint, after reproaching him for the evils he had brought upon Italy, warned him that he would die before long. In the year after this memorable interview St. Benedict's own life came to an end. Shortly before he had lost his sister Scholastica, who had followed him to Subiaco and Monte Cassino, and also adopted the religious life, dwelling in a cell at a short distance from the monastery. He paid her a visit once a year, and left directions that he was to be buried near her grave on the site of the former shrine of Apollo.

One great proof, as we have seen, that St. Benedict's life-work was the creation of a man of genius and met a genuine need of the day consists in the enormous diffusion it so rapidly achieved. Another is the very remarkable fact that almost at the same time, but quite independently of him, the veteran statesman Cassiodorus, who had been absorbed all his life in political affairs, instituted a Rule resembling that of the Saint, in his own native place. During Witigis's reign, when Goths and Imperials had long come into violent conflict, he had been forced to recognise that Theodoric's great idea of welding Italians and Goths into one nation—an idea that he also had strenuously promoted for many years—was a dream that could never be realised. Therefore having now passed his sixtieth year, collected all his epistles and completed his Treatise on the Soul, he retired to his native province and founded two convents near Squillace. One of these was a mere hermitage on the hill above the town, for any one in need of absolute solitude ; but the other, a real and fittingly arranged monastery, was established a

little further off at Vivarium, on the banks of the river Pellena (539). Even as St. Benedict, when founding his monasteries, insisted on adding manual labour to the contemplative life, so Cassiodorus combined mental labour with contemplation, and furnished a personal example of this double life. In fact many of his works were written in the cloister of Vivarium, and among them his commentary on the "Psalms," on the "Epistles of the Apostles," his "Tripartite History" ("Historia Tripartita"), a compendium of three histories of the Church, which he had caused to be translated from the Greek by Epiphanius. He also composed certain rules of goodly life, and a book entitled, "De Orthographia," containing precepts for the art of literary composition. Undoubtedly Cassiodorus was rather a man of letters and rhetorician than a saint, not precisely qualified to be a real founder of religious institutions. Nevertheless, his idea of introducing intellectual labour into the monastic life was—like the manual labour imposed by St. Benedict—so admirably suited to the needs of the period, that it was also adopted by the Benedictines. Accordingly, the latter transcribed many precious works of antiquity, thus preserving them from otherwise inevitable destruction. Monte Cassino became, as it were, a beacon-fire of civilisation, and its rays being reflected in every convent of the same Order, a track of light pierced the dark gloom of the Middle Ages to mark the way towards a brighter future.



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